Fairbury History Stories Volume 5

by

Dale C. Maley

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Fairbury History Stories Volume 5
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Author Spotlight

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Foreword

The first settlers in the Fairbury area was Major Darnell south of town in 1829 and the McDowells north of town in 1832. In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad installed new tracks which helped to create the village of Fairbury.

This book is a collection of over 70 different carefully researched stories about various aspects of Fairbury history. These stories run the range from the pioneer settlers to modern efforts to preserve Fairbury history.

It is hoped this book will help people better understand the almost 200 years of rich history that helped to define the community of Fairbury.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks go to the Dominy Memorial Library for digitizing the Blade newspaper and making it available online. These archives are the primary source of information for these Fairbury history stories.

Thanks also go to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Their collection was often used to research and to develop these Fairbury history stories.

Thanks also go to Diane Pawlowski for her assistance in researching the many topics covered in this book

Many thanks also go to Judith K. Wells for proofreading the manuscript.

CHAPTER 1

Book Design

The author began writing Fairbury history stories for the Blade newspaper in 2018. A maximum limit of 1,000 words were placed on these articles by the editor. There was a limit of two photographs or images per article. The vast majority of the articles only used one image to accompany each article.

With the 1,000 word limit, it was impractical to specifically cite each reference source that was used for every article. If the source was the Blade or the Pantagraph, the author often cited the publication and what year the article was found.

For this book, the text that was used in the original Blade article was repeated in this book. If more photographs or images are available for an article, they were added to the content of this book.

Each volume contains about 74 stories previous researched and published in the Fairbury Blade or on FairburyNews.Net.

Most newspaper stories are written such that the first paragraph is designed to grab the reader's attention so they will read the whole article. These history stories are not written in this format. Because these are history stories, they are generally written in chronological order. Often, the family tree of a person back to Europe is the introduction of each story. The author believes this format is less confusing to the reader versus mixing chronological events within a story.

Demise of the Fairbury Blade
Unfortunately, the Fairbury Blade newspaper went out of business in early 2023. The last one of my stories published in the Blade was about Honegger's in the December 2022 issue.

After the Blade was defunct, my new stories started being published on the FairburyNews.Net website in early 2023.

Errors

The author has made every attempt to be as accurate as possible with the data used in this book. Some of this data came from Ancestry.com. The danger of using data from Ancestry.com is that it is often not verifiable to a source document.

In a few cases, readers have pointed out errors in the story when they were originally published. I always go back and correct the story once I verify there was a mistake.

CHAPTER 2

The Avoca Betterment Club

The ABC (Avoca Betterment Club) group was an organization of farmers and their families living in Avoca Township, north of Fairbury, between 1955 and 1965. The ABC club's Constitution stated that the organization was a group of neighbors who wished to improve the welfare of the people in their community. The Constitution also said the group would encourage, cooperate with, and work with any worthwhile community enterprises that would improve their homes and community.

Initially, the ABC group met once a month on Saturday nights at the Lodemia Hall in Avoca Township. Membership was open to farm families residing in Fairbury-Cropsey District #3 north of Route 24.

Lodemia is now a ghost town. In the 1950s, the Lodemia grain elevator operated on the railroad tracks. Lodemia Hall and an Avoca township shed were just northeast of the elevator. Today, the only thing left is the metal township shed.

In the 1950s, farmers had telephones and radios, and televisions became standard around 1960. Although farmers were using tractors instead of horses, there were still many more farm families in Avoca Township than there are today. There were few sources of entertainment for farm families. Farm families enjoyed meeting with their neighbors, and some form of entertainment was provided at the ABC meetings.

The twenty-four charter members of the ABC group included the families of James Goold, John Goold, Vernon Stephens, Vern Sanders, Howard Fugate, William Freed, William Frisby, Eldon Askew, Lester Perkins, Ernest Mies, Milton Harms, Kenneth Bressner, Darwin Freed, Warren Ernst, Glenn Bressner, Howard Wells, Cecil Ahlstrom, Mrs. Herbert, Gene Smallwood, Robert Link, Leslie Mies, Warren Ulfers, Walter Retter, and Jesse Brickey. Other families joined the group over the ten years it existed.

Each member family listed an improvement project for their farmstead. Typical projects included painting a house, mending a fence, tearing down

a building, or planting trees. Once a year, a lottery was used to determine which family the group would help complete their desired improvement project.

If a farmer could not complete his necessary farming operations because of an illness, his neighbors would volunteer to plow his fields or harvest his crops.

The construction date of Lodemia Hall is still being determined. According to the Blade newspaper archives, it was in existence by 1931. The building had a large kitchen area and an elevated stage. The Steidinger family donated a piano, and the ABC group purchased a record player for entertainment. Children of the member families would often sing, dance, and give recitations on various topics for entertainment.

The large kitchen area at Lodemia Hall was used for meeting events like pancake suppers and chili suppers. The kitchen also helped provide refreshments after each meeting.

Most meetings of the ABC group included a presentation by a member or a special guest speaker. Members would often show photographic slides of their family vacations. John Wagenseller traveled extensively to several foreign countries, and he presented slides of his trips. Local bankers, government officials, and local organizations often gave presentations about local topics of interest.

According to the minutes for the February 1959 meeting of the ABC group, "Mush the Magician," Reis entertained the young and the old alike with his sleight of hand and his musical selections at the piano.

John Wagenseller, a member of the ABC group, was a stamp collector and gave a talk about stamp collecting at the September 1959 meeting. Mr. Wagenseller likened the lives of the farmers to postage stamps and then gave some advice to all the members. He suggested that every person should set a goal, stick to their job, be dependable, take their licking, be willing to be smeared, and be great.

The ABC group also took field trips. Sometimes, they visited a member's farm to review a new or improved farming technique. Other times, they

visited places like Honegger's Hatchery in Forrest, Honegger's Mill in Fairbury, Dwight Women's Prison, and the agricultural farms in Champaign at the University of Illinois.

In 1963, Charles Maley (1934-2009) was the President of the ABC group. That year, 27 families paid their dues to the group. In February 1963, Mr. Maley arranged for his mother, Frances Maley, to be the guest speaker. At that time, Francis Maley was the Livingston County Nurse. In her presentation, Mrs. Maley explained a new program that was being carried out in the local school system for "educationally mentally handicapped" students. The Chatsworth, Forrest-Strawn, and Fairbury-Cropsey school districts established a special classroom for these students in the Cropsey school building. Mrs. Audrey Honegger was the teacher, and the expenses were paid by the State of Illinois and the three local school systems.

President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, by Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, Texas. The death of President Kennedy deeply saddened the entire nation.

Shortly after President Kennedy was assassinated, Bill Fugate gave a color slide presentation about his recent trip to Denmark. Before giving his presentation, Bill asked the ABC group members to observe a moment of silence in honor of the slain President.

For the December 1963 meeting, several children of ABC group members were involved with the entertainment portion of the meeting. Carol Mies performed a piano solo. Diane Bressner, Susie Frisby, Terry Ahring, Carol Mies, and Cheryl Stephens sang several songs. Recitations were given by Randy Freed, Dale Maley, and Willie Ralph Freed. Miss Ann Mies did a clarinet solo, and Kevin Bressner sang a solo song. The entire group then sang several songs to close out the entertainment portion of the meeting.

1965 was the final year the ABC group existed. Harvey Ahring was the President in 1965. The group held a picnic lunch at Bud Wink's cabin on the Vermilion River. Five families and three guests "enjoyed a sumptuous noon meal and then reclined in the shade to enjoy the little breeze the hot afternoon gave them. Several members of the group went fishing in the Vermilion River and caught some good-sized fish. This event marked the close of the ABC organization.

By 1965, many of the farm children had grown up to be adults. There were also many sources of entertainment, including television and movies. For ten years, the Avoca Betterment Club played an essential role in the lives of the farm families in Avoca Township.

Three farm children provide musical entertainment for a Christmas meeting of the ABC (Avoca Betterment Club) group on the raised stage at Lodemia Hall.

CHAPTER 3

Chatsworth Train Wreck and the Police Gazette

The Chatsworth Train Wreck occurred in 1887 when a TP&W excursion train to Niagara Falls was wrecked just east of Chatsworth. As this train approached a fourteen-foot-long wood bridge, the engineer and fireman on the first locomotive noticed flames on the track. Since there was not enough time to stop the train before the bridge, the fireman jumped from the engine. The engineer stayed on the locomotive, and it made it over the burning bridge before it collapsed. The second locomotive and many subsequent wood passenger cars went off the track and down into the earth below the damaged bridge.

As each wooden passenger car descended into the ditch, it sheared the passenger area entirely off the passenger car in front of it. This phenomenon was called telescoping. Most of the passengers in these telescoped cars were instantly killed. Although the exact numbers are still not known for sure, typical estimates for the train wreck were 625 total passengers, with 85 killed and 372 injured.

The Blade noted that twenty-six people boarded the train at Fairbury. Twenty-three of these people were Fairbury citizens. Miraculously, none of these twenty-three Fairbury citizens were killed. Most of them suffered minor injuries. Fairbury doctors immediately rushed to the wreck site to help tend to the wounded.

In terms of fatalities, the Chatsworth Train Wreck was the second-worst train wreck in that era. The Ashtabula River Railroad Disaster had 92 deaths, which exceeded the 85 deaths on the Chatsworth Train Wreck. In terms of the total human toll, the Chatsworth Train Wreck was the worst because 372 were injured compared to the 64 injured on the Ashtabula Wreck. Even today, the Chatsworth Train Wreck is still the seventh-worst in U.S. history.

One magazine of that era that covered the Chatsworth Train Wreck was the Police Gazette. Today, we would call this a "sensational" type of

magazine. The magazine focused on scandalous crimes involving famous people.

The Police Gazette magazine must have decided to publish a story about the Chatsworth Train Wreck because of the many reports that thieves robbed the dead and the injured shortly after the wreck. One early theory was that thieves intentionally burned down the little wooden bridge so the train would crash, and then they could rob the victims. This theory was quickly proven wrong. The bridge likely caught fire from burning embers dropped from a freight train, which passed over the bridge a few hours before the Niagara excursion train.

The Chatsworth Train Wreck was the cover story on the August 27, 1887 issue of the Police Gazette magazine. The cover listed the train wreck story as "The Terrible Illinois Railroad Slaughter: A Gory Hecatomb." The word hecatomb came from an ancient Greek or Roman sacrifice of 100 oxen or cattle. In the 1887 era, it referred to the sacrifice or slaughter of many victims.

The front cover of the magazine had an illustration of an injured man, with a gun pointed at his head, lying beside his dead wife and child. The caption for the illustration was, "He blew his brains out: A victim of the Chatsworth railroad slaughter kills himself by the side of his dead wife and child."

One paragraph of the story was titled "Men Worse Than Ghouls." The magazine reported that a band of abominable, heartless miscreants robbed the dead and injured. Immediately after the wreck, there was a danger the bridge fire would start the wooden cars on fire with passengers still trapped inside the cars. The thieves entered these cars, and the trapped passengers begged them to help free them. Instead of helping to free them, the fiends stripped them of their watches and jewelry and searched their pockets for money.

When the dead bodies were laid out in the cornfields, these thieves searched and stripped the bodies of any valuables. The article alleged that a pile of 16 empty purses was found the morning after the wreck, proving there was a band of thieves robbing the dead and injured passengers.

The magazine speculated that the thieves were either on the train or waiting by the burned-out bridge. It also reported that if the plunderers had been caught, they would surely have been lynched.

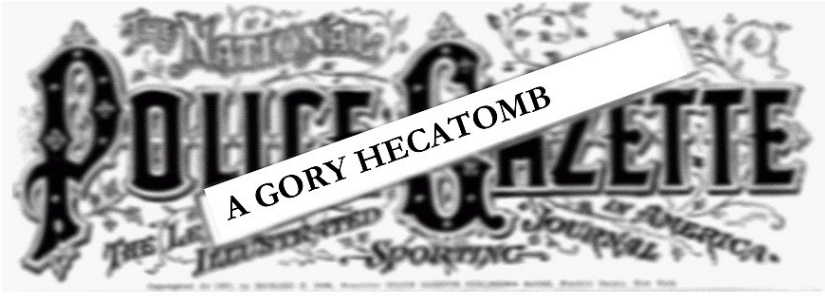
The train wreck article recounted the most horrific incident of the wreck. A man, his wife, and their young daughter boarded the Niagara excursion train in Peoria. In the wreckage, all three were pinned by broken woodwork from their train car. When rescuers arrived, the man instructed them to remove his wife first because their child was already dead. The rescuers freed the severely injured wife and moved her to the adjacent cornfield. They then moved the dead girl and her father and laid them beside the mother. The father was in terrible pain, with both of his legs broken.

In a few minutes, the wife died. The father then cried out, "My God, there is nothing more for me to live for now." The father then took a pistol from his pocket and shot himself. This incident was the basis for the story shown on the magazine cover.

In that era, trains were the primary means of transportation. Pickpockets and thieves often rode these trains and robbed the passengers. Several published accounts of Fairbury men who were robbed while riding passenger trains exist. The Niagara excursion train was well advertised, and trains packed with passengers would have been a prime target for thieves.

The train wreck site was also similar to a bombing scene from a war. Debris and passengers' possessions would have been scattered and easily lost in the confusion. We will never know for sure if thieves robbed the dead and injured or if items were simply lost in the wreck scene. A transcribed version of the 1887 Police Gazette story about the Chatsworth Train Wreck can be read online at https://tinyurl.com/y89gmtko.

THE TERRIBLE ILLINOIS RAILROAD SLAUGHTER



NEW YORK, SATURDAY, AUGUST 27, 1887

Top portion of the front page of the Police Gazette magazine that published an article about the 1887 Chatsworth Train Wreck.

CHAPTER 4

History of Fairbury's Tarbolton Masonic Lodge

The history of Tarbolton Lodge 351 in Fairbury actually traces back to the birth of Scotland's most famous poet, Robert Burns, who was born in 1759. Mr. Burns lived in Tarbolton, Scotland, and died relatively young at the age of 37 in 1796. His most famous poem and song was Auld Lang Syne, often sung on the last day of each year. Other poems and songs of Burns that remain well known across the world today include "A Red, Red Rose," "A Man's a Man for A' That," "To a Louse," "To a Mouse," "The Battle of Sherramuir," "Tam o' Shanter" and "Ae Fond Kiss."

According to Wikipedia, Freemasonry or Masonry refers to fraternal organizations that trace their origins to the local guilds of stonemasons that, from the end of the 14th century, regulated the qualifications of stonemasons and their interaction with authorities and clients. Eventually, Masonic lodges were set up all over the United States.

Among our country's early Masonic leaders were founding fathers George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Paul Revere, and John Hancock. Throughout history, the Masons' diverse membership has consisted of emperors, kings, presidents, religious leaders, sports and entertainment legends, scientists, inventors, and statesmen, including 14 Presidents of the United States, 35 Supreme Court Justices, 17 Senators, 32 Military Leaders, and 13 Signers of the Constitution.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka railroad ran its tracts from Peoria to Indiana. By the time of the 1860 U.S. Census, the population of Fairbury was 269 residents.

On October 21, 1910, the Blade published an article about the 50th Anniversary of the Tarbolton Lodge. This article recounted that in 1860, nine residents applied for a charter to form Lodge 351 in Fairbury. Most lodges in the United States are named after the town where they are located. Two of the nine charter members of the Lodge greatly admired the works of Scottish poet Robert Burns, who lived in Tarbolton, Scotland.

One of these two members was Henry Remington (1820-1896). In 1860, Mr. Remington was 40 years old, and he owned a grain and livestock mercantile business in Fairbury with branches in Kentland and Remington, Indiana.

Lucius H. Nash (1823-1891) was the other member who admired Robert Burns. Mr. Nash was a Fairbury Constable who eventually moved to Chicago.

The new Lodge in Fairbury was named the Tarbolton Lodge number 351. The nine charter members of this organization were Aaron Weider, N.S. McDowell, Lucius H. Nash, Henry Remington, Robert Rumbolt, Horace M. Gillette, J. B. Hulsey, O. P. Ross, and S.R. Roberts. The charter was issued on October 3, 1860.

On October 29, 1960, the Blade published an article celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Tarbolton Lodge. This article recounted that in the organization's early years, they met in several different businesses and residences. In March of 1875, a massive fire left Tarbolton Lodge practically bankrupt. All of their equipment, paraphernalia, records, and the original charter were lost in this disastrous fire.

In 1875, the members of the Lodge contributed $600 to build a new building at 114 East Locust Street, which would be equivalent to $16,928 in today's dollars. The balance of the money needed to build the new building was borrowed from the Bartlett, Beach, and Dominy bank in Fairbury.

The organization's new building was finished in 1876. The plan was to use the second story for Tarbolton Lodge activities and rent out the first floor to local businesses. In 1960, the first story was rented to the Bricker Drug Store and the Loy Ten Cent Store. The second story was redecorated in 1960 as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary.

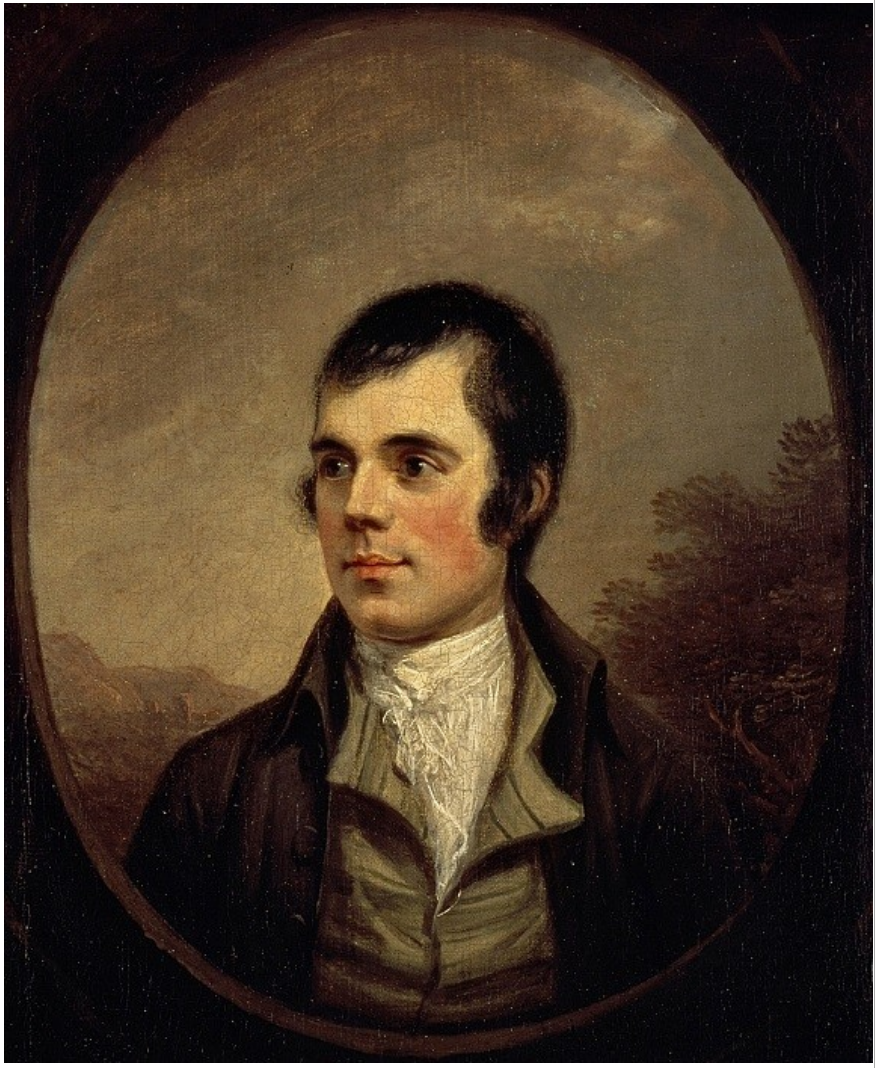
The Sanborn Insurance Company made a series of maps of Fairbury between 1885 and 1924. The 1885 Sanborn map shows the Tarbolton Lodge building labeled the "Masonic Hall."

Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 continues to be active today. Over the last three years, the Lodge has awarded over $8,000 in scholarships to Prairie Central graduating seniors. The Lodge loves to support young adults who are the future of the local community.

The Lodge sponsors golf outings to raise money for local causes. In 2023, Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 presented the Fairbury Fire Department with a check for $4,400.

The publication for Illinois Masonic Lodges is called the Illinois Freemasonry Magazine. The Winter 2024 edition of this magazine published a story written by Michael P. Wallace, a member of Fairbury's Tarbolton Lodge No. 351. The story is titled ***Why Tarbolton?*** Mr. Wallace recounted that Fairbury Lodge got its name because two of the charter members liked the poetry and songs written by Robert Burns from Tarbolton, Scotland.

Amazingly, Tarbolton Lodge No. 351 continues to be an active part of the community 164 years after its founding in 1860. You can access the Facebook page for the Lodge using the link: https://www.facebook.com/The.Fairbury.Lodge/. You can also learn more about Illinois Freemasonry using the link https://ilmason.org/.



1787 portrait of famous Scottish poet Robert Burns (1759-1796) who lived in Tarbolton, Scotland.

CHAPTER 5

History of the Fairbury Odd Fellows

IOOF stands for Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a nonpolitical, nonsectarian, international fraternal order. It is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal orders, with over 600,000 members in over 10,000 lodges across 30 countries.

When people first hear about the Odd Fellows, they usually ask, "Why do they have such a strange name for their organization?" In 1987, Delores Homes wrote an article for the Lincoln Journal. In her article, Delores indicated that the name came from the fact that the Odd Fellows originated in 18th-century England when middle-class workers formed local fraternities for mutual employment help and financial support.

Until then, only the aristocracy had established such philanthropic cliques, and these associations of "common men" were considered "odd" in the sense of being extraordinary.

Born in London, Thomas Wildey brought the Odd Fellows to North America. In 1819, he formed the first Independent Order of Odd Fellows in Baltimore, Maryland. Only 18 years later, in 1837, the first order was formed in Illinois.

Like most early social clubs, the Odd Fellows was a male-only organization. Schuyler Colfax (1823-1885) was only one of two men in American history who served as Speaker of the House of Representatives and Vice-President. Schuyler Colfax was a very active Odd Fellows member. In 1851, Schuyler Colfax recommended that a female auxiliary be created and named the Rebekahs. The Odd Fells organization approved his recommendation on September 20, 1851. The village of Colfax is also named after Schuyler Colfax.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. By the 1860 U.S. Census, the village had grown to 269 residents.

On October 3, 1860, nine Fairbury men received a charter to create a Masonic group called Tarbolton Lodge, number 351. The nine charter members of this organization were Aaron Weider, N.S. McDowell, Lucius H. Nash, Henry Remington, Robert Rumbolt, Horace M. Gillette, J. B. Hulsey, O. P. Ross, and S.R. Roberts. It was named the Tarbolton Lodge because two of the nine charter members greatly admired the works of Scottish poet Robert Burns, who lived in Tarbolton, Scotland.

Just nine days later, on October 12, 1860, Fairbury was granted a charter to form the Independent Order of Odd Fellows named the Fairbury Livingston Lodge 290. According to the 1878 Livingston County history book, the five charter members were J. F. Blackburn, John J. Young, W. H. Strevell, John T. Bowen, and John Zimmerman.

William H. Strevell lived in Fairbury and was a brother to Jason W. Strevell (1832-1903). William Strevell was the first of five charter members to officially join the Odd Fellows. Jason lived in Pontiac and entertained Abraham Lincoln in his home in January 1860. Jason Strevell's home at 401 W. Livingston in Pontiac is on the National Register of Historic Places and is open for free public tours from one to three p.m. on the third Saturday of each month.

Just six months after the Tarbolton Lodge and the Odd Fellows were formed in Fairbury, the Civil War started at 4:30 a.m. on April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbor.

Approximately 300 men from the Fairbury area enlisted in the Union Army to fight in the Civil War. Because so many of the men were gone fighting in the Civil War, the village's growth slowed to a crawl. In her book Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars, Alma Lewis James recounted how the Kring family returned Fairbury's Main Street to a wheat field during the Civil War.

An anonymous reader wrote a Letter to the Editor of the Blade in the May 11, 1889 edition. This reader recounted that in 1862, when the 129th Infantry Division Company E was formed, more than 15 members of that

unit were members of the IOOF Livingston Lodge No. 290. Only the reader and a few men were left as members of the Odd Fellows Lodge. These few members were able to keep Lodge No. 290 going until the men returned after the Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. Colonel A. J. Cropsey, who Cropsey Township and the village of Cropsey are named after, was the leader of the 129th Infantry Division Company E.

On January 28, 1874, the Fairbury Odd Fellows invited Schuyler Colfax to be their guest speaker in Fairbury. Over 1,000 men and women gathered to hear Schuyler Colfax speak. Mr. Colfax is credited with founding the Rebekahs, the Odd Fellows female auxiliary group.

In its early years, the Odd Fellows met at several different locations. In 1895, they built a new building at 122 West Locust Street in Fairbury. The cost of this building in 1895 was $13,000, which would be equivalent to $483,400 in today's dollars.

The business buildings on Locust Street used coal to heat them until the 1950s. These businesses needed an easy way to deliver coal to the basement where the boilers were located. One solution was to build a coal bin under the sidewalk in front of the building. A removable manhole was placed in the sidewalk's concrete. A horse-drawn coal wagon could drive up next to the manhole, and coal could be delivered down the manhole into the basement coal bin.

Many buildings were planned to have both basement businesses and coal bins. The entrance to the basement business was an opening on the sidewalk with a stairway going to the basement. Some basement businesses had plate-glass storefront windows similar to the upper-level businesses. The coal bin was walled off from the basement business entrance to keep the dirty coal dust away from patrons. The December 1894 Blade published an article describing the new Odd Fellows Temple that would be built. The article said the basement would be fitted up for barbershops and other businesses.

A September 1987 Blade article contains much history about the Odd Fellows. This article noted that they were the first organization to

recognize women. Their Rebekah affiliation was chartered on November 23, 1893. Back in 1987, the Odd Fellows had 94 members.

In recent years, the Odd Fellows have been well known for hosting their annual pancake and sausage fundraising event. The group also fills the sandboxes at North Park each year. The Odd Fellows often donate money to support various causes in the Fairbury area.

Amazingly, the Odd Fellows Livingston Lodge Number 290 continues to be an active part of the community 164 years after its founding in 1860. To learn more about the Fairbury Odd Fellows, visit their Facebook page using this link.

The officers of Livingston Lodge #290 in 2023 are shown in this photo. Pictured left to right Arnold Ifft (Chaplain), Terry Lester (Deputy Grand Master 145), Phil Orr (Vice Grand), Nina Hoselton (Treasurer), Robert Hammer (Right Supporter to Noble Grand), Steve Pigg (Grand Master of the State of Illinois), Nyles Schumm (Noble Grand), Joe Kindleberger (Financial Secretary), Ray Jackson (Grand Warden of the state of Illinois), Dawn Hurt (Secretary), Steve Metz (Right Supporter to Vice Grand).

CHAPTER 6

Promising Military Career Ended by Spanish Flu

Judge C.F.H. Carrithers (1854-1933) was a well-known Fairbury attorney and Livingston County Judge. He married Louise Marie Brydia (1854-1893) and moved from Saunemin to Fairbury. Their first child, Ralph Carrithers, died at ten months of age. Their second child, Truman William Carrithers, was born in 1882.

Truman W. Carrithers attended Fairbury schools and graduated with the class of 1898. Other class members included Addie Lytle, Lettie Stuckey, Herbert Stafford, Jessie Epstein, Clara Powell, and Lloyd Dancey. Truman was only 15 years old when he graduated from high school.

Truman was then nominated by Congressman Walter Reeves and appointed by President William McKinley to West Point. Truman entered West Point in June of 1899 and was the youngest member of that class. A roommate of Truman Carrithers at West Point was Douglas MacArthur. Mr. MacArthur became one of the most famous generals of World War II in the Pacific Theater. General MacArthur graduated with Truman Carrithers in the class of 1903. Truman received his commission as a second lieutenant seven weeks before he had his 21st birthday. After graduating from West Point, Truman married Miss Hope Donley from Peoria.

Truman's first assignment was to the 20th Infantry at Fort Sheridan. In December, the 20th Infantry was ordered to the Philippine Islands and took station in Manila. After a year in Manila and six months at Fort William McKinley, he was sent to Southern Mindanao in July 1905, serving at Cotobato, Reigne Regente, and Fort Pikit. He was made Battalion Quartermaster before returning to the States in the spring of 1906.

The regiment had just reached its home station, Monterey, California when the great earthquake and fire occurred in San Francisco. As Quartermaster, he took a wagon train loaded with supplies overland to San Francisco.

Upon his arrival, he entered with indefatigable energy upon the task of relief, constantly working for eighty hours without sleep.

The regiment ultimately returned to Monterey, where he was the assistant to the Quartermaster until the regiment was again ordered to the Philippines. Three months later, he was promoted to the grade of First Lieutenant and ordered to join the 29th Infantry in New York at Fort Niagara.

After one year at Fort Niagara, Truman was sent to Evansville, Indiana, as a district recruiting officer. He served in that capacity for two years. His district placed fourth in the United States in the number of accepted recruits.

In March 1913, he joined the 22nd Infantry at Texas City. A year later, he was sent to Fort Sam Houston and was Post Adjutant for a year and a half. In September 1915, he rejoined his regiment at Douglas, Arizona, remaining only a month when he was ordered to the 29th Infantry at Panama.

In 1916, he was promoted to the grade of Captain, joined the newly organized 33rd Infantry at Gatun, and later was appointed post adjutant. He was promoted to major in that regiment in 1917 and was the commanding officer for a short time.

In the spring of 1918, he was selected by a board of general officers for duty on the general staff and ordered to Washington, DC. He was assigned to duty with the legislative branch of the general staff at the Army War College and, while serving there, was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Truman told his friends that the keenest disappointment of his life was that he could not be assigned to overseas duty and participate in the active fighting of World War I. The military officials thought his skills and experience would better serve the country by being assigned to Washington.

Unfortunately, Truman contracted the Spanish Flu in 1918 and died ten days later. He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Truman was just 36 years of age when he died.

Lieutenant Colonel Truman Carrithers and his wife Hope had one child, Truman William Carrithers Jr. He was born in 1907 when his father was stationed in California. Truman Carrithers Jr. attended and graduated from West Point in 1930, like his father.

After graduation in 1930, Truman Carrithers Jr. was assigned to the Field Artillery, where he was a Second Lieutenant with the 18th Field Artillery at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. His first marriage was to Carol Hick, born January 31, 1915, in Hobart, Oklahoma. In 1942, he retired from the United States Army after attaining the rank of Captain. In 1943, he married Mrs. Elizabeth Kislingbury Hanna Adams (1901-1987). She was known as Beth Beri, who was a Ziegfeld Showgirl. Truman Carrithers Jr. held various jobs after he retired from the military. He died in 1981 at the age of 74. There was no memorial service at his request, and his body was donated to the Medical College of the University of California in San Francisco for research purposes.

Many of the famous generals of World War II graduated from West Point in the same era that Lieutenant Colonel Truman Carrithers did. General MacArthur graduated in 1903, the same year as Lieutenant Colonel Carrithers. General Patton graduated from West Point in 1909, and General Eisenhower graduated in 1915. It is interesting to speculate whether or not Truman Carrithers could have become a famous World War II general if the Spanish Flu had not prematurely ended his military career in 1918.

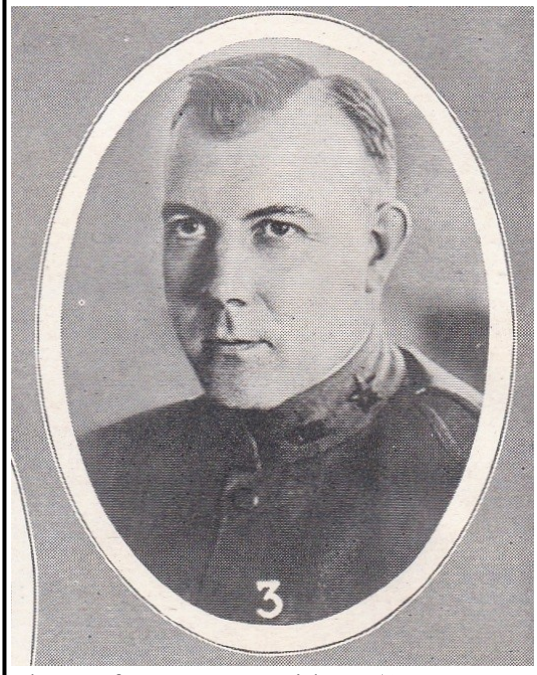


Photo of Truman Carrithers (1882-1918). He was a Fairbury native and had a promising military career until he died from the Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918.

CHAPTER 7

More Fairbury History Mysteries

All small towns have some historical mysteries that still need to be solved. Fairbury has its fair share of history mysteries as well.

John Coomer Sr. was the first person to build a house in Fairbury in late 1857. John ran a lumberyard for about five years. He sold the lumberyard, became a real estate agent, and made loans. John had a granddaughter named Harriet Fogle. Harriet graduated with the Class of 1911 in Fairbury. She married a young medical doctor, Warren Bell, in 1916. Harriet and her husband lived in New York until they moved to Seattle around 1927.

In 1927, Harriet was visiting friends in New York. During her return trip from New York to Seattle, she stopped in at Fairbury. The Pantagraph noted that Harriet had entered the film-producing business in late 1926. She had one film produced and was going to California to make six more movies. By 1930, Harriet had divorced Dr. Bell and married James Fulton. They moved to the San Diego area and had three children.

Unfortunately, no records can be found regarding the number of films she made or the names of the movies. Maybe someday, more information about her pioneering role in making films will be discovered.

At one time, Fairbury had over 100 African Americans living in town. They built an African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) church at the southwest corner of Second and Walnut Streets. An African Methodist Episcopal church yearbook shows the Fairbury church was still operating in 1967. A new home was built on the same site in 1972, indicating the old church was torn down between 1967 and 1972. Unfortunately, no photographs of the exterior or interior of the church can be found. Maybe someday, old photos will be discovered showing this church's interior or exterior.

Movies are a fascinating historical record. Unfortunately, only two sets of films about Fairbury can still be viewed. Dr. Pendergast was a Fairbury optometrist who had the unusual hobby of collecting and repairing cigar

store Indians. He became a nationally known expert in this field. In 1942, a short movie clip was made about Dr. Pendergast fixing cigar store Indians. This video can be viewed at https://tinyurl.com/v5edk56.

The second set of video clips that can still be viewed were shot by Watt Nakamura circa 1960. Watt was a Fairbury photographer who shot videos at the Indian Creek Golf Course, the Fairbury Swimming Pool, the Homecoming Parade, and Honegger's hatchery. These clips can be found on YouTube by searching for "Nakamura Fairbury."

In 1921, the Central Opera House, located at the southeast corner of Third and Maple Streets, announced a new initiative. First was a three-week-long contest for the citizens of Fairbury to vote for which young local lady would star in a film made in Fairbury. Miss Irma Fitzgerald won the competition. As the winner, she got to pick which of her Fairbury friends would appear in the movie. In May of 1921, the film The Waif played for two nights with standing room only crowds. Unfortunately, no copies of this film can be found. It is very likely the film was destroyed when this opera house burned down in 1952.

In 1937, E. N. Nelson, manager of the Central Theater, contracted Pacific Film Productions to make a movie about Fairbury. The film company shot two reels, or 2,000 feet of film, in Fairbury. The video included school scenes, business clubs, women's clubs, business scenes, street scenes, and pictures of leading merchants.

The Pacific Film Productions company made many small-town videos. Unfortunately, only a few of them have survived and can still be viewed. No copy of the Fairbury film can be found. The film may have been destroyed in the 1952 opera house fire. It would be fascinating to see what life was like in Fairbury in 1937.

John Virgin was a prominent Fairbury businessman. He imported Percherons from France and sold them to Fairbury area farmers. In 1888, he built a grand stable called the Horse Palace on Third Street just north of Walton's.

Third Street was paved with bricks in the early 1930s. An old photograph still exists of the workers paving the block just north of Old City Hall. The

outline of the unique architecture of the Horse Palace can be seen in this old photo. The Horse Palace was believed to be torn down between the early 1930s and about 1945. The exact date of when the Horse Palace was torn down remains a mystery.

William Stackpole was one of early Fairbury's most interesting residents. William was a gold prospector, real estate salesperson, inventor, writer, publisher, and visionary during his life. His home at 312 West Maple Street still stands at the southeast corner of Marsh Park. William made and lost three different fortunes. He died penniless. William, his wife Jennie, and his daughter Anna were buried in unmarked graves in Graceland Cemetery. Their grave location is the Old Cemetery, block 16, lot 2, grave numbers 2,3 and 4.

William and his family moved to Fairbury in 1857. In 1867, son William G. Stackpole died at one year of age. Daughter Mary Lilia Stackpole died in Fairbury in 1870 at the age of thirteen. In 1871, daughter Isabelle E. Stackpole passed away at one year of age.

The burial location of these three Stackpole children is not known. The early Graceland burial records were destroyed in a fire many years ago. Maybe someday, the burial location of these three children will be discovered.

The photographer was standing at the intersection of Locust and Third Streets and was looking north onto Third Street. The unique architecture of John Virgin's Horse Palace can be seen just north of Walton's on the left hand side. The Third Street Opera House can be seen on the right hand side of the photograph. New bricks are stacked on the east side of the street so workmen can pave Third Street with bricks.

CHAPTER 8

History of the Payne and Milne Drugstores

Many Fairbury citizens collect antique glass bottles from various drug stores and dairies. Bottles from the Payne and Milne drug stores are relatively rare. The story of these drugstores started with George Milne's birth in 1846 in Manchester, England. When George was four years old, his family emigrated from England to the Morrison, Illinois, area. The village of Morrison is 60 miles southeast of Galena, Illinois.

In 1865, George E. Milne married Hettie Sheldon Stowell. Hettie was 22 years old and was from Sharon, Illinois. The village of Sharon is a small town near Vandalia, Illinois. George was 18 years old when he got married. George and Hettie Milne had eight children. The George and Hettie Milne family lived in Morrison, Illinois. George became a grocer.

In 1878, George and Hettie Milne had a son named George Edmund Milne in Morrison, Illinois. In the 1900 U.S. Census, George E. Milne was 22 years old and was still living with his parents. George E. Milne reported that his occupation was apprentice pharmacist.

Around 1901, when George was 23 years old, he started attending the Northwestern School of Pharmacy in Chicago. The School of Pharmacy was established in Chicago in 1886 with 62 students. It ceased operation after the 1916-17 academic year with only 62 students. George E. Milne graduated from the School of Pharmacy in 1903. There were 64 graduates in the 1903 Pharmacy class.

Martin Van Buren Payne was born in 1843 in Monroe County, Indiana. He married Katherine Ursula Ulmer in 1868 when he was 24 and she was 18. Ursula was born in Baden-Wurttemberg, Germany. Martin and Ursula Payne had 11 children. Mr. Payne farmed in the Arrowsmith area.

In 1883, the Martin Payne family moved from Arrowsmith to a farm five miles southwest of Fairbury. In 1885, Martin and Ursula Payne moved to a house in Fairbury. One of Payne's eleven children was Charles E. Payne, who was born in 1869 in Saybrook. Charles Payne quickly became one of

the most respected businessmen in Fairbury. He invested in real estate and several businesses in Fairbury.

In 1895, Charles Payne was 26 years old. In October of that year, the Blade reported that Charles Payne and Emer Hemphill had purchased the H. J. Ramsey drug store at the northeast corner of Second and Locust Streets. They renamed the company Payne & Hemphill.

In January 1899, the partnership of Payne and Hemphill was ended. Charles E. Payne and his brother Oliver Payne opened a new drug store in the Peter Laubenheimer building. The new firm was named the Payne Bros. drug store. Both Charles and Oliver Payne were registered pharmacists.

In February 1899, the Blade extensively described the new Payne Bros. drug store at Second and Main Streets. In addition to drugs, the new company sold books, stationery, musical instruments, pianos, and organs.

In 1903, Martin Payne hired George E. Milne to work as a druggist in the Payne Bros. drugstore in Fairbury. Twenty-five-year-old George Milne quickly learned the Payne brothers had a 22-year-old sister named Viola Laven Payne. George E. Milne announced he was marrying Viola Lavern Payne two years after he moved to Fairbury. When they married in 1905, George was 27, and Viola was 24. They lived in a house on Oak Street.

Unfortunately, in 1906, Martin Payne was killed in Walkerton, Indiana, when he was run over by a freight train operating in reverse. Mr. Martin had been visiting relatives of his mother in the Walkerton area.

Both Charles and Oliver Payne died at relatively young ages. Oliver Payne died in 1908 and was only 33 years old. Charles Payne died in 1913 at the age of 43. When Oliver Payne died, George E. Milne took over the drugstore and renamed it the G. E. Milne Corner Drug Store. In the 1910 Census, Charles Payne reported returning to his real estate business. In that same Census, George and Viola Milne were still living on Oak Street, and he was operating the drugstore.

In November 1912, George E. Milne sold his drugstore to L. B. Decker, who had worked there for several years. George and Viola Milne then moved to Dixon, Illinois, where George continued to be a druggist.

In the 1920 Census, George was 42, and his wife Viola was 39 years of age. They lived in Dixon, Illinois, and George was still a druggist.

In the 1930 Census, George and Viola Milne had moved from Dixon to Mattoon, Illinois. George became a district manager for the Illinois State Employment Service. Near the end of his working career, George operated the Outdoor Advertising Agency in Mattoon.

George E. Milne died in 1961 at the age of 83. He was interred in the mausoleum at the Park Hill Cemetery in Bloomington by Miller Park. Viola Milne lived to be 89 and died in 1963. She was buried next to her husband in the mausoleum at the Park Hill Cemetery. George and Viola never had any children.

Milne is a relatively unusual name. Several Fairbury citizens have speculated that George E. Milne, the druggist, was related to the Milne family that operated two greenhouses. Genealogical research found that George E. Milne's ancestors came from England, while the ancestors of the Milne greenhouse family came from Scotland. George E. Milne, the druggist, was not closely related to the Milne greenhouse family.

Glass bottles found today from the Payne & Hemphill drugstore were likely manufactured between 1895 and 1899. Bottles from the Payne Bros. drugstore date back to the 1899 to 1908 era. Glass containers from the G. E. Milne drugstore were made between 1908 and 1912.

MONEY TALKS

But no where more eloquently than here. We must have more room for our large assortment of Christmas goods now coming in.

Our Annual Clean-up Sale

Begins Saturday Nov. 10. Note our prices:

Wall Paper per roll.....	2c
Paint, all colors, per pint.....	15c
Fine box paper and envelopes to match.....	10c
200 cloth bound-books to sell each.....	5c
150 paper covered books at.....	3c
Regular 10c ink tablets.....	5c

1000 new souvenir postal cards just received.

You can save money on lead and oil at

G. E. MILNE

Corner Drug Store Fairbury, Ill.

November 16, 1906, ad in the Fairbury Blade newspaper for the Milne Drug Store.

CHAPTER 9

Local Historian Reveals How Historical Information Discovered

The most common question readers of local history stories ask is, "How do you ever find out all the detailed historical information in these stories?" Researching and writing a local history story is similar to the process used by chefs. A chef gathers all the needed ingredients for a dish, mixes them, and then cooks them into a gourmet meal.

A history story author gathers the ingredients by searching and discovering every fact possible about the story. This step is the most difficult part of the process. Once all the information has been captured, it is relatively easy to generate an interesting history story.

When researching a person in Fairbury, the first step is to search the four Livingston County history books published in 1878, 1888, 1900, and 1909. All four of these books have been digitized and are word-searchable. Eight thousand pages of Livingston County history can be searched in less than five minutes. CD copies of these history books can be purchased for $5 each at the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Free copies of the four books can be downloaded from the Livingston County Historical Society at https://tinyurl.com/s6eqxg4.

The next step is to see if the person or their relatives are buried in Graceland Cemetery. There are two primary places to search for burials in this cemetery. The first is the Dominy Memorial Library website. When you are on the library's website, click on the Cemetery tab at the top and search for burials. The second source is the Prairie Central High School website. Students have been mapping local cemeteries, including Graceland, in the last few years. This website can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/sm338yt.

It is also beneficial to construct a family tree on Ancestry.com. A subscription costs about $25 per month. An account at Ancestry.com gives access to many databases of records that are not readily available anywhere else. These records include U.S. Census data and military

records. Some documents members post are incorrect, so analyze them carefully before accepting their authenticity. Many users stop their monthly subscriptions after completing their family tree and downloading all reference documents.

Obituaries are a wealth of family information. Obituaries can be found in the old Blade newspapers for free by accessing the archives from the Dominy Memorial Library website. Click on the Blade tab on the Dominy Library website and search. Unfortunately, the oldest Blades only go back to 1871.

The Pantagraph archives go back further in time than the Blade, to 1857. An annual subscription fee is required to access these archives. Because the Pantagraph archives are much easier to search than the Blade archives, it is better to search them first, then the Blade.

Another subscription service searches many newspapers across the United States. Newspapers.com allows users to search all of these newspapers for historical information and download copies of any information they find.

Google has digitized many old books and magazines. Using the general Google search box to find these old books and magazines is not productive. The Google Book search option will focus only on these types of documents. General Google searches can also be used.

The federal government has a database that shows who first bought farmland in Illinois. The website is maintained by the Bureau of Land Management and can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/ybpeqbsw. Landowners can also be found by consulting the 1893 and 1911 Livingston County Atlas books.

Find-A-Grave is a free website that allows searches for burials. Often, obituaries or other information are also included in the search results. The State of Illinois has an excellent website for searching for Civil War veterans. This site can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/ybkcdl7f.

Google has a better-performing website than the U.S. Patent Office for finding patents. To access Google's patent search engine, search for

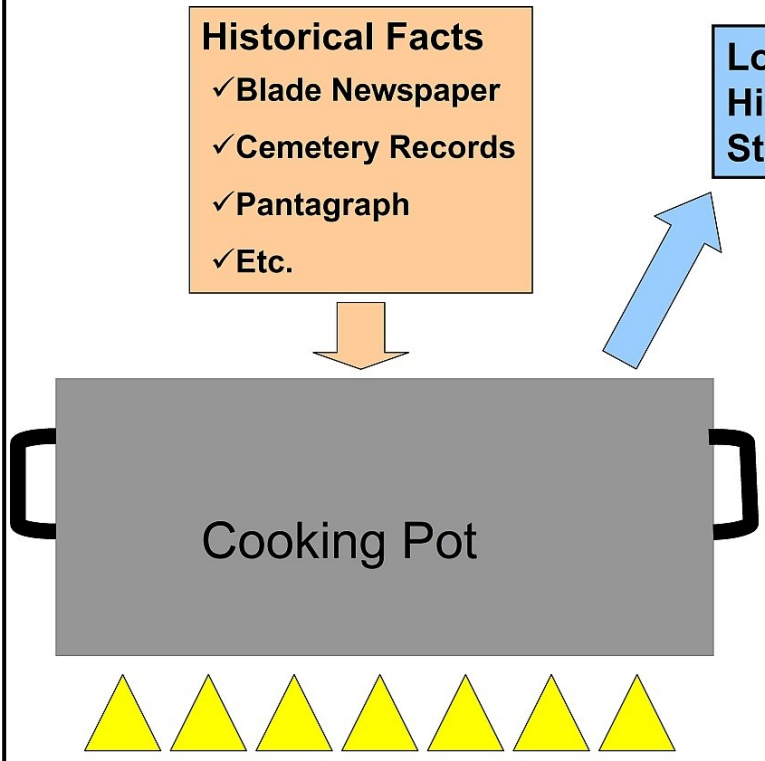
"Google Patent Search," then search by name. You can also search for patents on the USPTO.gov website.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum has many records that still need to be digitized. Some of these records include high school yearbooks, country school records, Fairbury phone books from 1930, and miscellaneous other information. A visit to the Echoes Museum can be beneficial in finding historical information. The Fort at Lexington is a historical research building maintained by the Lexington Historical Society. The people there are very helpful in answering questions.

The Dominy Memorial Library also has a lot of historical information. Librarians are very helpful and will point you in the right direction to answer your questions. The Pontiac Library has a special room dedicated to local history. Unfortunately, the Pontiac Daily Leader archives are only available online at the Pontiac Library unless you have a Pontiac library card.

The Sanborn Insurance Company made five maps of Fairbury between the years of 1885 and 1911. All of these maps can be digitally accessed at https://tinyurl.com/uaj3wxw. Mylar copies of the oldest 1885 Sanborn maps are available at the Dominy Library and the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

Thanks to the Internet, most historical research can be quickly and efficiently conducted from home. Visits to local museums and libraries can also be very beneficial. The Livingston County Historical Society website has a link to a guide explaining how to do genealogical searches. It can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/vsgockr.



Researching and then writing a local history story is very similar to how a chef cooks a gourmet meal. The first step is to gather all the "ingredients", which is every available fact related to the story. Once all the facts are gathered, it is relatively easy to weave these facts into an informative and interesting local history story.

CHAPTER 10

Cemeteries Valuable Historical Reference

Cemeteries are treasure troves of information about the past. Family tree researchers rely on the information engraved on the gravestones to construct their family trees, and history story researchers use this information to build accurate and exciting local history stories.

The primary cemeteries in the Fairbury area include Graceland Cemetery, Graceland South, Avoca Cemetery, Cooper Cemetery, Weston Cemetery, St. Johns Catholic Cemetery, South Apostolic Christian Cemetery, Cropsey Cemetery, Fairview Cemetery, and the Spence Cemetery.

One of the earliest attempts to gather gravestone information from Livingston County cemeteries was a survey prompted by the Illinois State Legislature in 1929. The State of Illinois funded a study to identify where every veteran was buried in Illinois. This study resulted in the publication of a book titled ***Roll of Honor: Record of Burial Places of Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Army Nurses of All Wars of the United States Buried in the State of Illinois.*** The wars covered by this study included the Blackhawk War, the Civil War, the Indian War, the Mexican War, the Revolutionary War, the Spanish War, and World War I. Many veterans of these wars were buried in Fairbury area cemeteries. This book has been converted to a PDF file and is available online.

The Illinois Veteran's Commission conducted a similar study of veteran burials in Illinois in 1956. It covered all veteran burials through 1955. Copies of the results for Livingston County veterans' burials are available online.

Mary B. Patterson (1921-2006) was born at Cornell in 1921 and attended Cornell schools. She then worked at the Pontiac Chair

Company. She married Arnold Peterson in 1938, and he died in 1980. She later married Lloyd Erickson in 1981 at Tuscola. Mary was a member of the Livingston County Historical Society.

In the 1970s, Mary and some of her friends visited every cemetery in Livingston County and recorded the information from the gravestones. In 1976, she published a two-volume set of books titled ***Livingston County Cemetery Records***. As of 2024, these two books have not been converted to a digital format. Her books are at the Pontiac Public Library and the Fairbury Dominy Memorial Library. Her book project was the first to attempt to capture all the burials in every cemetery in Livingston County.

In the 1990s, Salt Lake City resident Jim Tipton was a self-described nerdy kid who was fascinated with finding graves of famous celebrities and had a hobby of learning HTML software used to create websites.

The Internet started to be widely used by the general public in 1994. In 1995, Jim Tipton developed a new website he named Find A Grave. He converted it to a commercial entity in 1998. Users of the website can add new information about grave sites. The website can also be searched to find information about ancestors. There is no cost to utilize this website. According to the Find a Grave website, there are 84 cemeteries in Livingston County.

In 2013, Tipton sold his Find a Grave website to Ancestry.com, the largest website for conducting genealogical research. Users of Ancestry.com must pay a monthly subscription fee of $25 per month as of 2024. Ancestry.com has automatic links to the Find A Grave website for users constructing family trees of their ancestors.

Because the Find A Grave website does not require a subscription, many people upload obituaries and family photos to it, which users can access at no cost.

For many years, the Fairbury Dominy Library website has had a link that allows users to search Graceland Cemetery for free. Once a user gets to the library's website, the tab labeled "Resources" is clicked, and then the tab "Cemetery Records" is selected. Users can then search the Graceland Cemetery records by the deceased's last name. The information for some of the people buried in unmarked graves is also included in the results.

The most recent project, which was to construct a database of all burials in the 21 cemeteries in the Prairie Central School district, was initiated by geography teacher Andrew Quain in the fall of 2015. Mr. Quain and his geography students visited local cemeteries and recorded all the information on the gravestones. This data was then entered into a Google Maps database, which is word-searchable for ancestors. This database can be accessed at this Internet address: https://prairiecentralil.sites.thrillshare.com/page/geography-class-cemetery-project.

As of 2024, fifteen of the twenty-one cemeteries in the Prairie School district have been analyzed. The six cemeteries that have not been analyzed yet include the Pike, Calvary Catholic, Cooper, Graceland South, North Apostolic Christian, and Strawn cemeteries.

The 15 cemeteries that have been analyzed include the Chenoa, Payne, Weston, Fairview, Spence, Avoca, Graceland, St. John's Catholic, South Apostolic Christian, Cropsey, Forrest, Pleasant Ridge, St. Patrick's Catholic, Germanville, and Chatsworth-Charlotte cemeteries.

In recent years, the trend towards cremations versus burials of the deceased in a cemetery has become very strong. According to the National Funeral Directors Association, the national median cost of a funeral with a viewing and burial in a cemetery in 2023 was $8,300, while the median cost of a funeral with a cremation was $6,280.

Because cremations are less expensive than burials, the 2024 cremation rate is projected to be 62%, and the burial rate is projected to be 33%. By 2045, the cremation rate is expected to reach 82%.

Unfortunately, the decreasing number of burials with gravestones will reduce the amount of information available to future family researchers from cemeteries. Since many newspapers continue to go out of business, obituaries from newspapers will be less available to researchers in the future. Future researchers will have to rely on obituary information published on the Internet from the various funeral homes in the geographical area being researched.

Gravestones offer valuable information to family history researchers and history story writers.

CHAPTER 11

Trials & Tribulations of Fairbury Privies

For about 100 years, privies or outhouses were built at every home in Fairbury and on each farm. In her Fairbury history book titled ***Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars***, Alma Lewis James described the design of the typical home in the 1880s. These homes were usually constructed of wood framing and often had elaborate gingerbread decorations from that period. These homes had wide lawns with plenty of shade trees, and every yard had a fence around it. Most fences were white wood picket fences, but a few were made of iron or hedges. The fences were needed to protect children and property from wandering animals and packs of stray dogs in the streets.

Just outside the gate in the fence, abutting the street, was a hitching post and stepping block. The hitching post was used to tie up horses. The stepping block made entering high horse-drawn buggies or mounting saddle horses convenient. It consisted of two steps made of stone, with the flat side of the rock facing the street. The early streets were dirt.

Most of the private and public sidewalks were made of wood boards. A few wealthier citizens had flagstones leading to their front door. A barn, woodshed, and perhaps a chicken coop were at the back of every home.

A privy stood a short distance back from the house and was often painted the same color as the house. The woodpile was usually on the path from the house to the privy. A resident would take out a bucket of ashes from the wood-burning stove in the home and dump the ashes on the path to the privy. After using the privy, the same resident would take some wood from the woodpile back into the house, accomplishing two tasks on one trip to the privy.

The most common size privy was a "three-holer." One of the holes was reduced in size to fit the smaller youngsters. There were no windows in the privy, but ventilation holes were usually added in the upper part of the building. Diamond and crescent shapes were the most popular for ventilator holes.

The door for the privy was designed to open inwards into the privy. If someone was using the privy, they could keep the door closed with their foot if someone else came to the privy. Inside the privy was a box for the corn cobs that were used instead of toilet paper. In later years, a nail was added to hold a catalog that had the sheets ripped out for use as toilet paper. If the homeowner wanted an artistic effect for the privy, morning glories were planted and trained to climb over the small building.

One annual Fairbury event impacted the design of privies located in town. This yearly event was Halloween. In the late 19th century, the custom was for Fairbury youth to play many pranks on homeowners on Halloween night. Homeowners expected such antics as stealing the front fence gate and depositing it in a neighbor's yard. Other common tricks were to throw rotten vegetables and dead cats on front porches. Often, sections of fences or boardwalks would be moved elsewhere in town. It would take homeowners several days after Halloween to search, find, and carry back their missing property.

One of the worst pranks ever done on Halloween was placing a horse-drawn wagon onto the schoolhouse roof. It took real work by the boys to get the wagon apart, hoist it piece by piece to the roof, and reassemble it up against the stars. After Halloween, the owner had to pay someone to return the wagon back to Earth. To the annoyed homeowner, it was anything but a joke.

On Halloween night, young boys would search for an occupied privy in Fairbury. When they found one, they would push it over so it landed with the door side down. Escape was impossible for the luckless prisoner trapped inside. The poor prisoner had to yell loud enough for someone to come to the rescue.

To combat the tipping over of privies, many homeowners installed some long vertical boards on the outside of the privy. These boards were sunk five feet into the ground. These boards prevented the Halloween pranksters from tipping over the privy.

The South Side grade school was built in 1880 at the northeast corner of Fourth Street and Route 24, and the North Side grade school was built in

1895 at the northwest corner of Fourth and Maple Streets. In 1918, a city-wide naming contest was conducted. The North Side school was renamed Isaac Walton, and the South Side school was renamed Edison.

According to Alma Lewis James in her Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars book, the South Side school was initially designed with outdoor plumbing. A boy's privy was built on the boy's side of the playground, and a girl's privy was constructed on the girl's side of the playground. Each privy building had a many-holed seat that stretched the length of each building. There were no interior walls in these buildings.

By 1911, indoor plumbing began to appear in Fairbury city homes. Mr. C. B. Day (1886-1974) was one of Fairbury's early plumbers. Mr. Day was an excellent marketer. He came up with an innovative exhibit for the 1911 Fairbury Fair. Mr. Day set up a mock indoor bathroom. In this mock bathroom, Mr. Day exhibited the latest features of indoor plumbing, including toilets, bathtubs, and sinks. His innovative display caused many Fairbury women to switch to indoor plumbing.

In December of 1957, the City of Fairbury voted to issue new bonds to pay for the first waste treatment plant. In May 1958, the City Council voted to add a sewer charge to the water bills to pay off the bonds. The plant was built and put into operation in 1959.

Improved plumbing technology and the availability of public sewers to each home in Fairbury spelled the end of the privy. Modern versions of the privy are still used in some remote areas in the United States.

Typical Privy or Outhouse

CHAPTER 12

Large Home of John J. Taylor was Fairbury Hospital

The first Fairbury hospital was started in 1911 by two nurses who were classmates at the Sanitarium Training School in Hinsdale, Illinois. These two nurses were Rachel Olson and Anna Martha Gadeken Vetter. The progression of the Fairbury hospitals' locations was the Archer House on Locust Street, a house at the northwest corner of the intersection of First Street and Route 24, a block house just east of what is now Circle K gas station, the J.J. Taylor large house on South Fifth Street, and the brick hospital at South Fifth.

In 1928, the hospital's location changed from the block house by Circle K to a large old house built by John J. Taylor at South Fifth Street. His home served as the Fairbury Hospital until November 1953, when the brick hospital was completed on South Fifth Street. The old Taylor house, built in 1868, was likely torn down a few years after the brick hospital's opening in 1953.

The story of the Taylor family began with the birth of John J. Taylor in 1818 in Milton, New York. He was the son of George W. Taylor (1796-1879) and Mary H. L. Dupersoy (1790-1837). George and Mary Taylor had three children.

Unfortunately, Mary Taylor died in 1837 at the age of 46. Her son, John J. Taylor, was 18 years of age when his mother died. His father, George W. Taylor, then married Cynthia Wood (1804-1877). George and Cynthia Taylor had four children. Two of these children were William H. Taylor (1840-1925) and Procter Taylor (1844-1926). Many years later, in 1886, John J. Taylor and his two half-brothers became business partners, and they created the firm Taylor Bros. & Co. in Quincy, Ill. This company operated a wheat grinding mill.

In 1853, John J. Taylor, at the age of 35, completed his first land purchase transaction in Livingston County. Between 1853 and 1858, John J. Taylor made 26 land purchase transactions and bought a total of 2,240 acres in

Livingston County. In 1850, Congress passed a new law awarding free land to veterans of past wars. Many of these veterans elected to sell their land rights instead of moving to the swampy lands in Central Illinois. The official land price in the 1850s was $2.50 per acre to buy the land from the federal government. The military veterans sold their rights for about 30 cents an acre, or about 12 cents on the dollar of the government price. John J. Taylor used these military land patents for every one of his 26 land purchase transactions.

John J. Taylor grew up in Brunswick, Maine. In 1855, he married Miss Hannah Elizabeth Carey in Maine. John was 36, and Hannah was 27 when they married. John and Hannah Taylor had three children.

John J. Taylor and Hannah E. Carey were second cousins because they shared the same great-grandparents of Captain Jonathan Carey (1717-1801) and Elizabeth Procter (1724-1803). Their grandparents were not the same.

Also, in 1855, John J. Taylor published an article in the Livingston County News newspaper. In the article, Mr. Taylor reported that he had made a profit on his wheat crop in Livingston County after he had paid all his expenses. Unfortunately, due to bad weather in the years after he published this article, local wheat farmers lost money trying to grow wheat.

John J. Taylor initially lived in Pontiac before he built his large home on South Fifth Street in Fairbury in 1868. In the 1860 Census, he was living in Pontiac. In the 1870 Census, he listed his occupation as a banker and was residing in Fairbury. Mr. Taylor listed his net worth as $60,000 in 1870. This net worth would equal $1.47 million in today's dollars.

On April 2, 1872, the First National Bank was organized in Fairbury. Mr. I. P. McDowell was President, John J. Taylor was Vice-President, and T. S. O. McDowell was the Cashier. Mr. Taylor remained the Vice-President of this bank until about 1894.

Most of Livingston County's land was swampland and unsuitable for growing grain crops. In the late 1870s, farmers began experimenting with draining the farmland using clay field tiles. In the 1880s, most of the

farmland in Livingston County was tiled. Once the land was tiled, it became some of the most productive farmland on the planet.

Field tile was in such great demand that two large tile factories were set up in the Fairbury area. Mr. Rufus C. Straight owned one large tile factory, which was located where the Dos Fuentes Mexican restaurant is on Route 24 on the west side of Fairbury. Mr. James W. McDowell operated another large tile factory north of Fairbury in Section 22 of Avoca Township.

John J. Taylor was one of the early adopters of draining swampy land using clay tiles. He wrote several articles documenting his success using clay tiles. One of his first articles was published in the Pontiac Sentinel newspaper on July 28, 1880. Another was published in the 1883 Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the State of Illinois.

In these articles, John J. Taylor gave specific examples of the advantages of tiling, including increases in crop yields he experienced after tiling his fields.

In January of 1886, the firm of Taylor Bros. & Co. was created. This firm owned and operated a wheat grinding mill in Quincy, Illinois. The three partners were John J. Taylor, his half-brother William H. Tayor, and his half-brother Procter Taylor.

In 1890, John J. Taylor, 72, was a very successful farmer, banker, and businessman. He donated $1,000 to build an observatory at Bowdoin College, a private liberal arts college in Brunswick, Maine. This donation would be equivalent to $34,500 in today's dollars. The observatory still stands and is being refurbished, with a completion date in 2025.

In 1894, John J. Taylor was 76 years old. Evidence from that period suggests that he started to experience some mental issues associated with aging. In 1894, Mr. Taylor ended his long tenure as bank vice president. His partnership with his two half-brothers in the Quincy milling business was forced into financial receivership.

In that era, the milling business needed $25,000, and John J. Taylor agreed to furnish the necessary funds. Instead of providing the firm with the funds, Mr. Taylor commenced to transfer his real estate holdings to his

daughter and her husband, who was an attorney. His partners believed John J. Taylor's actions were the results of temporary insanity. To protect the firm, the two half-brothers appealed to a local court for protection. The court appointed the mill manager, Seymour J. Carter, to receive and take legal possession of the mill. All of the creditors were paid, and the business continued to operate successfully.

According to his obituary, John J. Taylor was never the same after 1894. For the last three years of his life, he refused to leave his large home on South Fifth Street and would not see any visitors. Many of his friends wanted to stop and visit with him, but they could not do so.

In 1897, John J. Taylor died at the age of 79. His obituary noted that he was once the head of Fairbury's Taylor & Weaver real estate and loan firm. In addition to owning stock in the First National Bank in Fairbury, he also owned stock in several banks in the Chicago area. Mr. Taylor was buried in Graceland Cemetery.

Four years later, in 1901, Hannah Taylor died at the age of 73. She was buried with her husband in Graceland Cemetery.

James C. Taylor, son of John and Hannah Taylor, continued to live in the large home on South Fifth Street after his parent's death. James never married. In the 1910 Census, Frieda Munz (1872-1927) lived with James Taylor and was the housekeeper. Frieda Munz (1872-1927) was the daughter of Conrad Munz Sr. (1841-1931) and Catherine Blumier (1849-1926).

In 1923, James C. Taylor died at the age of 58, and he was still living in the large family home on South Fifth Street. His obituary noted that James was one of the largest landowners in the Fairbury area.

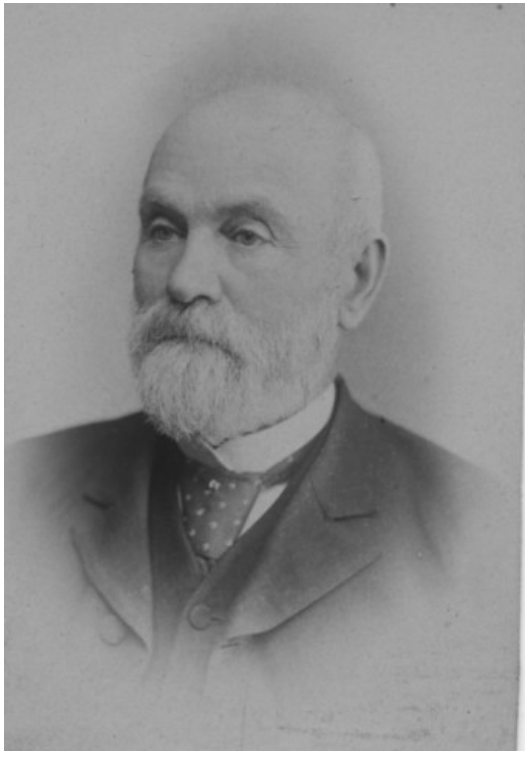
When he died, James C. Taylor apparently left the large Taylor family house to his housekeeper, Frieda Munz. In 1925, Frieda married Samuel H. Scharlach (1858-1930). Samuel was 66, and she was 52 when they got married. Two years later, Frieda Scharlach died at the age of 54.

In 1928, local community leaders decided that Fairbury needed a larger hospital. On January 29, 1928, the Hospital Board bought the large Taylor

house on South Fifth Street from the estate of Frieda Munz Scharlach for $6,155. Local volunteers helped to remodel this large, rambling house into a hospital. The volunteers converted the residence into a ten-bed hospital with a large kitchen, a nursery, a dumb waiter, an elevator, and a reception office. They added to the house, giving the hospital an operating room. On August 17, 1929, the public was invited to view the new hospital. Fairbury residents were pleased with the accomplishments.

The large Taylor house was torn down once the new brick hospital was completed in 1953. John J. Taylor was a wealthy farmer, banker, and businessman in Fairbury for over three decades.

A February 1946 photo looking northeast at the home of John J. Taylor that served as the Fairbury Hospital location from 1929 until 1953. The large house on South Fifth Street was built in 1868 and was torn down around 1953. Note the walkway connecting the house to the new brick obstetrics building.



John J. Taylor

Hannah Taylor

CHAPTER 13

First Mail Delivery in Fairbury Area

The story about the first mail route that served the Fairbury area is fascinating. The first mail carrier in this area was George Washington Rice (1834-1926). At least two data sources describe how these first mail routes were operated.

The first historical reference source for the first mail routes was a 1915 four-page paper titled ***Old Time Postal Distribution in Illinois*** by Dr. John Ryan (1860-1948). Dr. Ryan was a Methodist minister in Central Illinois for over 60 years. He was a minister in Pontiac and was the Chaplain of the Boys Reformatory for 20 years. Reverend Ryan was very interested in local history and served as the President of the Livingston County Historical Society. A copy of Dr. Ryan's paper can be viewed or downloaded from https://tinyurl.com/5cv4u9c7.

A copy of Dr. Ryan's paper about early postal distribution was found by accident in early 2024 when the Livingston County Historical Society's archives were being inventoried. Dr. Ryan interviewed Mr. G. W. Rice, the first mail carrier who lived in Pontiac in 1915, for his paper.

Further investigation found that G. W. Rice's full name was George Washington Rice (1834-1926). The Daily Leader obituary for Mr. Rice noted that he was Pontiac's first mail carrier and gave some details of his mail route. Mr. Rice was also a Civil War veteran and a long-time Pontiac merchant, including operating a furniture factory.

In the 1830s, Mr. W. K. Brown settled on Mud Creek in Esmen Township. While living in Livingston County, Mr. Brown took charge of several mail routes. He later moved to Ottawa in 1848.

In 1839, George Rice was 15 years old. He attended school but was able to work part-time on a mail route for Mr. Brown. George eventually worked as a mail carrier on each of the five mail routes Mr. Brown was in charge of. The mail carriers usually rode on horseback to complete their deliveries.

The Ottawa to Bloomington mail route served Livingston County. Every Friday morning, George left Ottawa on his mail route. He took a ferry to cross the Illinois River, and his first stop was the Post Office at Covel Creek, run by Mr. Richardson. The next stop was the home of Mr. Elmer Baldwin. George then proceeded to Norton Mackey's home on Otter Creek. George's next stop before taking dinner was the home of Isaac Painter in East Streator.

After dinner, George rode his horse the nine miles from Streator to New Michigan. Mr. Richards kept that postal office. New Michigan is now a ghost town southeast of Streator. It had a post office from 1849 until 1872.

George next went to a home in Sunbury Township. W. K. Brown, John Bradley, and E. G. Rice kept this office at different times. Mr. E. G. Rice was George Rice's father so that George could spend the night at his parents' house on Friday night.

George's mail route resumed Saturday morning when he brought the mail to Pontiac and went to the office in the Willett Gray and Samuel Ladd store.

George then traveled four miles southeast of Pontiac to Daniel Rockwoods's home, where dinner was secured. The next stop was the small village of Avoca in the McDowell settlement. Initially, Mr. Wilson kept the office on the South Fork of the Vermilion River. Because flooding prevented the mail carrier from crossing the river, the location was changed to the McDowell's home. The village of Avoca had a post office from 1838 until 1872.

The last segment of Saturday's route was from Avoca to Indian Grove Township. Fairbury was not founded until 1857, so George delivered mail before the village existed. George spent the night at the Indian Grove postal stop, which had a post office from 1846 until 1859.

On Sunday morning, George rode his horse the 15 miles from Indian Grove to Lexington. In that era, George saw no human inhabitants on this portion of his route. Mr. Flesher kept the Lexington office, and George usually arrived around noon. A church was nearby, and Sunday services

were usually over by noon. Churchgoers would linger after church until the mail carrier arrived so they could get their mail.

George then stopped at Money Creek, and his last stop was Bloomington. He started his return trip to Ottawa from Bloomington on Monday morning and arrived back in Ottawa on Tuesday night.

George was paid $8 a month as a postal carrier. In 1850, this salary would equal about $300 in today's dollars.

The mail route was very challenging for the mail carrier in the wintertime. George often had to cross the Illinois River at Ottawa when the ice was thick enough to prevent the ferry from operating but not thick enough for someone to walk on. When this happened, George would alternately put two wood planks in front of him to walk on with his mail sack to cross the thin ice.

The only compensation for traveling in the bad weather was traveling when the weather was nice. Dr. Ryan noted the mail carrier "got to enjoy the gorgeous color of the prairies with the wild free life of bird and beast, full rivers pressing their wooded shores, and variegated fields of green and gold blending with the purple skyline."

Early mail carrier George W. Rice likely saw prairie scenes like this as he rode his horse through Livingston County on his mail route. This photo was taken at the Weston Cemetery on Route 24 between Fairbury and Weston. This old cemetery has many original plants that grew on the Livingston County prairies.

CHAPTER 14

Early History of the Kickapoo

In 1828, a Kickapoo tribe of about 650 people moved from Mackinaw, Illinois, to a location on Indian Creek about seven miles south of present-day Fairbury. The Kickapoo stayed at this location for two years. In 1830, this Kickapoo tribe moved again to Oliver's Grove, about three miles south of present-day Chatsworth.

Valentine and Rachael Darnall were the first white settlers in Livingston County in 1830, settling south of Fairbury. About the same time the Darnalls built their first log cabin, the Kickapoo tribe was moving to Oliver's Grove.

The Kickapoo tribe lived south of Chatsworth until the 1832 Black Hawk War. After the war ended, this tribe was forced to leave Illinois and move to Missouri.

The 1878 Livingston County history book has a detailed description of the Kickapoo tribe from 1828 to 1832 and some limited information about the Kickapoo prior to 1828. Unfortunately, this history book does not document the Kickapoo's history for the prior centuries.

The Kickapoo had no written language, so no written records compiled by the tribe exist today. Therefore, we must rely on written documents from the French and British who occupied Illinois before it became a state in 1818.

In 2011, Mark J. Wagner wrote a book titled ***The Rhoads Site: A Historic Kickapoo Village on the Illinois Prairie.*** Mr. Wagner's primary focus was to learn more information about a Kickapoo village just east of Lincoln, Illinois, on the Henry Rhoads farm. Mr. Wagner also researched and documented the history of the Kickapoo tribe, going back to the early 1600s and up to 1832, when they were forced to leave Illinois.

In his book, Mr. Wagner noted that in the 1600s, the Kickapoo lived in southeast Michigan. The tribe then moved to northern Illinois and southern

Wisconsin. In 1673, French explorers Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet were the first Europeans to visit Illinois. They claimed the territory for France and named it Pays des Illinois, or Land of the Illinois.

Marquette and Jolliet started their trip at St. Ignace, located between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron. They traveled by boat westwards across the north shore of Lake Michigan and then entered Wisconsin into Green Bay. They proceeded west to the Mississippi River. They went down the Mississippi through St. Louis and down to Arkansas. On their return trip, Native Americans suggested they take the Illinois River to Chicago and Lake Michigan.

When the expedition was in southern Wisconsin, one of the native American tribes they encountered was the Kickapoo. This encounter indicated the Kickapoo had moved from southeast Michigan to southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois by 1673.

1680 French Jesuit René-Robert Cavelier de la Salle built a mission near present-day Peoria. About 20 years later, in 1699, a small group of French settlers from Canada created Cahokia, Illinois, the first permanent settlement on the Mississippi River.

In 1717, the Illinois Country was annexed to the French province of Louisiana and became known as "Upper Louisiana." In 1718, Fort de Chartres in southern Illinois was established as the center of French governance of Illinois.

Another Native American tribe located in southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois was the Fox. History books for that era refer to this tribe as the Fox. Modern-day descendants of this tribe prefer the name Mesquakie. In 1993, authors R. David Edmunds and Joseph L. Peyser published a book titled ***The Fox Wars: The Mesquakie Challenge to New France.*** In their book, the authors note that the Fox tribe had disputes in northern Illinois with many other Native American tribes and the French military. In 1730, the Fox decided to move away from their enemies and relocated to a site near present-day Arrowsmith, Illinois. The Fox built a fort at their new home near Arrowsmith.

Word of the new home of the Fox at Arrowsmith quickly spread to all the enemies of the Fox tribe, including many Native American tribes and the French military. These enemies of the Fox, including the Kickapoo, quickly surrounded the Fox fort, and a siege began. After a few days of siege, the Fox decided to sneak away from their fort during a massive thunderstorm. The French military instructed their Native American allies to wait until the next day to attack the Fox tribe because of too much confusion during the terrific thunderstorm. When the storm cleared the next day, the Fox had only been able to travel a few miles from their fort during the storm. The combined forces of the French military and their Native American allies killed almost all of the 500 men, women, and children in the Fox tribe. The Kickapoo participated in what is now known as the 1830 Fox Massacre at Arrowsmith.

In 1763. the French signed a treaty in Paris that designated the Mississippi River as a dividing stream, not a uniting one. After the French and Indian War, the Illinois Country east of the Mississippi River was ceded to the British, and the land west of the river was ceded to Spanish Louisiana.

The French occupied and claimed Illinois as French territory for 90 years, from 1673 until the treaty in 1763. Illinois then became a British possession after this treaty was signed.

According to legend, in 1769, the Starved Rock Massacre took place near LaSalle, Illinois. The legend claims that after a member of the Illiniwek Confederation killed Chief Pontiac, several tribes, including the Chippewa, Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Kickapoo, united to seek vengeance against the Illiniwek. These Native American tribes starved the Illiniwek tribe to death.

However, it's crucial to understand that the Starved Rock massacre is more of a legend than a verified historical event. Recent research has cast significant doubt on whether this massacre actually occurred or not. Very few facts have been found which substantiate this legend.

The 1878 Livingston County history book describes a massive battle between Native American tribes in 1774. This battle was the result of a land dispute with the Miami tribe on one side of the conflict and the Kickapoos and Pottawatomies on the other side. The two sides agreed to

select three hundred warriors and fight each other to determine the winner. At sunrise, the battle occurred on Sugar Creek's banks (now Bloomington-Normal). By the time the sun set that day, only 12 men remained who were not killed or mortally wounded. There were five Miamis still alive and seven Kickapoos and Pottawatomies.

In this battle, the Kickapoos and Pottawatomies were declared the victors. The Miami tribe retired to the east side of the Wabash River. The Kickapoo and Pottawatomie divided up the land west of the Wabash River. These two tribes agreed that an Indian trail passing near Oliver's Grove (three miles south of Chatsworth) would be the dividing line for the Illinois land. East and southwest of this line belonged to the Kickapoos and the remainder to the Pottawatomies.

The Treaty of Paris in 1783 ceded the Illinois Country to the United States. After the American Revolution ended in 1783, Illinois was technically part of the state of Virginia.

One of the few written accounts of how the Kickapoo lived in the 1780s is from William Biggs's in 1788. He was captured and held by the Kickapoo tribe for a while until they ransomed him and released him. They traveled about 30 miles daily on horseback near the Wabash River southeast of Champaign, Illinois. Mr. Biggs wrote a book describing the Kickapoo lifestyle in that era.

When the first surveyor passed through the land near present-day Leroy, Illinois, he noted that between 2,000 and 3,000 Kickapoo lived in their village in 1824. This site is now known as the Grand Village of the Kickapoo.

In 1828, about 650 members of this tribe moved to a location on Indian Creek about seven miles south of present-day Fairbury. The Kickapoo stayed at this location for two years. In 1830, this Kickapoo tribe moved again to Oliver's Grove, about three miles south of present-day Chatsworth. In 1832, this tribe was forced to move to Missouri. Eventually, portions of the Kickapoo tribe migrated to Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico. In 2024, a total of about 5,000 Kickapoo live in these three states and Mexico.

The Kickapoo people's migratory path started in southeast Michigan in 1600. By 1673, they had moved to southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois. By 1774, they were living west of the Wabash River in central Illinois. One branch of the tribe lived south of Fairbury and then Chatsworth in the 1828-1832 era. In 1832, the Kickapoo were forced to leave Illinois and move to Missouri. Today, there are about 5,000 descendants of this tribe living in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Mexico.

About 650 members of the Kickapoo tribe lived south of Fairbury from 1828 to 1830 and then south of Chatsworth from 1830 to 1832. In 1832, the tribe was forced to leave Illinois and they moved to Missouri. This image of typical Kickapoo life in that era is from a diorama at the Illinois State Museum.

CHAPTER 15

Will Artificial Intelligence Revolutionize Our Lives?

A new Artificial Intelligence (AI) software program called ChatGPT was released to the public for initial testing in November 2022. After a year and a half of testing, the production version of ChatGPT was released in August 2024. This new AI program has generated a host of other AI programs that have excited the public, businesses, and investors. This new software offers the potential to revolutionize many fields, including historical research.

Most people assume that AI is a new phenomenon that has only occurred in the last couple of years. In reality, AI dates back to the 1950s. Computers and their associated software received a lot of attention during World War II because they could speed up things like creating tables for how to aim a weapon and hit a target far away.

Credit for the words Artificial Intelligence is given to Marvin Minsky and John McCarthy, who hosted the first workshop on the topic at Dartmouth College in 1956. Following this workshop, AI experienced its first "boom" period, resulting in two decades of success in funding and technological progress.

AI research and results have been a cyclic phenomenon since the 1950s. Veterans of this industry refer to the boom and bust periods as AI Summers and AI Winters. The two decades after the 1956 Dartmouth conference are referred to as the first Summer phase.

Due to a lack of computing power, interest in AI declined, and the industry entered its first Winter period in the late 1970s.

The 1980s saw the second Summer phase of AI with the promise of developing Expert Systems that could replace human judgment. The general idea was that Expert Systems could learn the rules of logic that human experts used to solve problems. Once the Expert System learned the right rules, it could solve problems better and faster than human

beings. For several reasons, Expert System programs could never deliver the improvements initially forecasted, and the industry entered another Winter period.

Around 2010, the AI industry entered its third boom period, and the phrase "Machine Learning" was created. Each year, the amount of new information added to the Internet grows exponentially, and computing power has also grown exponentially.

A new concept was developed that could use massive computers to store all the accumulated knowledge on the Internet. Once all of this knowledge was captured, it could be used to solve problems quickly and efficiently. The initial use of ChatGPT was to create new documents such as essays, biographies, obituaries, and stories.

The traditional method of researching and writing local history stories has been for a human to search the Internet for all the information available about a topic. This process is very labor intensive, and many different sources on the Internet must be individually searched. An experienced historian then collects and organizes all of this information into an exciting and coherent history story.

While ChatGPT was still in its initial testing phase, an experiment was conducted. First, conventional research methods were used to learn everything possible about John Paul Yost from Pontiac, Illinois. This information was used to help write the history book ***The Zoath Yost Family of Pontiac, Illinois, by Dale C. Maley.***

ChatGPT was then asked to write a biography about John Paul Yost from Pontiac, Illinois. The ChatGPT program responded with a well-written biography about Mr. Yost, with nine different facts about his life. The AI-generated biography read well and sounded impressive. ChatGPT did not cite any references for its nine facts.

Unfortunately, every single one of the nine facts was wrong! When ChatGPT was asked for its reference source for the first fact, the AI program apologized and removed that fact from the biography. Each successive time that ChatGPT was asked for the reference where it found

the fact, it said there was no reference and removed the fact from the biography.

Although ChatGPT did not give accurate answers to questions, it became extremely popular with the general public because it does perform some tasks very well. The popularity of ChatGPT spawned the creation of many different types of AI programs.

Another type of AI program is Perplexity. It was first released in early 2023 and cites a reference for every fact it includes in its responses. In October 2024, the Perplexity AI program was asked to write a biography for John Paul Yost of Pontiac. Perplexity's resultant biography was very detailed and very accurate. The primary source for all of its facts was the recently published history book ***The Zoath Yost Family of Pontiac, Illinois, by Dale C. Maley.***

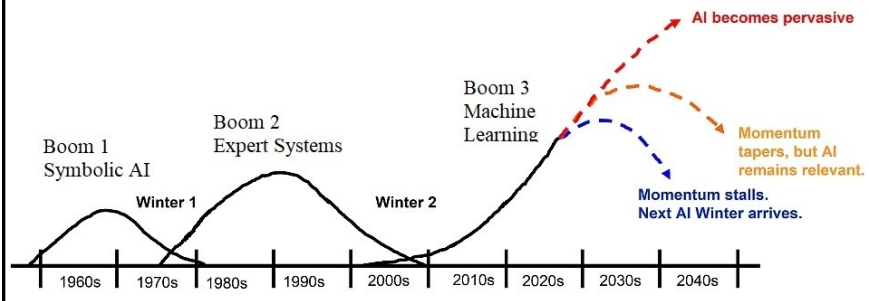
Other users of AI programs have reported great success in using some of the new AI programs to save time on common tasks. Some of these everyday tasks include creating new posts on Facebook, writing papers, creating YouTube videos, and creating PowerPoint presentations. Some new AI programs allow the content creator to use their own voice to convert written text to speech for videos.

A recent paper by anonymous authors about the AI industry is titled ***"Is the Next Winter Coming for AI?***" In this paper, the authors created an interesting chart documenting the boom and bust periods of AI over the last 70 years. The AI industry is currently in a boom or Summer period in its cycle.

The interesting question is what direction the AI industry will take in the future. The authors note that one option is that current momentum stalls out, and the industry goes into another Winter period. A second option is that AI becomes pervasive and is used in many different applications. The third option is that current momentum tapers off, but the AI industry remains relevant to the general public.

Based on the examples of ChatGPT and Perplexity noted above, AI momentum will reduce slightly, but the AI industry will remain an important productivity tool for users.

It will be interesting to see if AI remains popular or enters its third Winter period over the next decade. Current users should always review and question the accuracy of any information generated by today's AI programs.



Artificial intelligence has had a cyclic development path since it was first invented in the 1950s. Nobody knows if the current boom period will continue or we are headed to the next AI "Winter" period where use of the technology declines.

CHAPTER 16

Fairbury's First Eight Years

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. The first newspaper published in Fairbury was the Intelligencer in 1863. Unfortunately, only one article survives today from this newspaper. In 1958, the Blade republished this sole surviving Intelligencer article. This fascinating 1865 Intelligencer article recounts the development of Fairbury during its first eight years. The article is reprinted below.

This growing town, where we have located and where we propose publishing the Intelligencer in the future, is situated on the T.P. & W. R.R., twelve miles east of the junction with Chicago, Alton-St. Louis R.R. The original town plot was laid out by Cropsey and Chanute in 1857.

The first business house was opened about the 1st of January, 1858, by William Mitchell. Soon after, Vanemman and Fitch erected a warehouse and located as grain merchants. In the spring of 1858, Pogue, Amsbarry, and Thomas opened up a dry goods store in the building now occupied by Jones & Amsbary.

During the year, improvements went on rapidly. The Morris House and two boarding houses were erected; Patton & Dodds opened a grocery store; the depot was located and a building erected by subscriptions from the citizens of the town and vicinity; a lumber yard was established by John Coomer; a drug store by John Blackburn; a wagon making and repairing shop by Smith & Hall; and a blacksmith shop by Jacob Hunt. A Methodist church edifice was erected during the same year.

In 1859 a business house was opened by Remington & Gillett in the building now occupied by J. P. and W. S. McDowell. The flouring mill now owned and run so successfully by R. B. Wilson, was erected by W. G. McDowell, and many other smaller improvements were made.

In 1860, Pogue and Co. erected the large warehouse now run by Dresser & Co., which is such an advantage to the farming community, and a fine two-

story schoolhouse sufficient to accommodate over two hundred scholars, with four teachers selected.

In 1861, another store was opened by Strevell & Oliver in the building now occupied by H. Remington. Hulsey, Fulton & Co. opened a new drug store, and a Presbyterian church was built. Thus, year after year, our town has improved in business houses with proportionate growth in residence, until we now number five dry goods stores, one clothing store, with a fine stock of boots and shoes; four grocery stores, three hardware stores; two furniture stores and all other branches of business proportionately represented.

The amount of capital invested is perhaps larger for the size of the place than is to be found in any other town in this portion of the state. Businessmen do business upon their own capital, mainly, and do a safe as well as an extensive business. The bank of McDowell, Lyman & Co., is a valuable institution for our town while it, no doubt, yields a fine income to the firm. Through this bank, exchange can be had for doing business in any direction, and the unquestioned integrity of the several members of the firm is a guarantee to those who find it convenient to do business with them.

An important feature of our prosperity remains to be noticed. We refer to the great supply of coal, not only for ourselves but for our neighbors who, in the winter, at least, are quite dependent upon us. In 1859, Mr. J. L. Marsh & Co. bored for coal just west of the town, and being successful in finding a workable vein of coal, a shaft was immediately sunk. At a little over two hundred feet from the surface, a vein four feet and ten inches thick was struck, and the coal was found to be of a superior quality.

The town plot has been growing with the growth of business and the demand for more room. In 1859, J. L. Marsh laid out an addition of 80 acres on the west. In 1863, Caleb Patton laid out an addition to the South. In 1864 A. L. Pogue extended the town plot still farther south, and recently I. P. McDowell has laid out an addition on the Northeast and John Atkins on the South east. Over 300 acres are laid out in town lots, and still, the cry is for more room, and A. P. Straight, we learn, is about to yield of his farm lying on the southwest. We congratulate those who own land anywhere near Fairbury. They can soon sell-off in town lots.

The morals of the people are well cared for, and those who prefer good, moral society can have it, while we are sorry to say, there is a chance for the accommodation of those whose preference are otherwise. There are four organized religious societies in the place. The Methodist Church with Rev. J. G. Evans as pastor, has, we learn, a membership of 150 or upwards, and a large congregation. Their Sunday school, N. E. Lyman, the Superintendent, is said to be the finest in the county, having over 200 scholars, and being conducted with ability, and so as to make it interesting to all. The Presbyterian pulpit, is filled by Rev. W. T. Hempstead, a man of education and possessing quite a poetical gift.

The Baptist society is erecting a church which they hope to complete soon though they are not without any regular pastor, but have fortunately secured the services of Rev. Mr. Karnes for a short time while they are struggling to finish their house of worship. The Christian (Campbellite) society has for the present the service of H. Spence as pastor. Those wishing to attend Divisional Services have an opportunity of doing so where pulpits are ably filled.

But while the churches have been making laudable efforts to moralize the community, there have been here, and still are, influences at work to corrupt the youth, and paralyze the efforts of the good. That bane of human of society, the drinking saloon, has done its mischief here as well as elsewhere. We trust that the day is not far removed when these shall be completely routed out of our pleasant little town. Drinking saloons, even though they pass under the name of "beer saloons," will make drunkards. We bid God speed to the noble band of templars here who are battling the evil of intemperance in all of its hideous forms. We shall hereafter have something to say about some needed improvements.

The Intelligencer

The Civil War ended in April of 1865 when General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse. The Chicago Tribune chronicled the creation of Fairbury's first newspaper in its August 1865 issue. The Tribune reported that a new Republican paper had been started at Fairbury in Livingston County by J. S. Harper, and it was named the Intelligencer. Unfortunately, this newspaper only lasted about one year. Unfortunately, only one article from the Intelligencer still exists from its inaugural edition of 1865.

CHAPTER 17

Early Fairbury in National Newspapers

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. Several newspapers were published in early Fairbury, but except for one article, no copies of these newspapers exist today. The Blade archives, which are still accessible, start around 1871. Fortunately, there are a few references to Fairbury in other national newspapers before 1871.

In November of 1858, one year after Fairbury was founded, many letters were sent to the editors of newspapers around the world. This letter to the editor was titled "Growth of a Western Village." The letter recounted, "Last November there was but one house here; now there are over forty dwellings, seven stores, three warehouses, a church, schoolhouse, railway depot, steam mill, and other buildings—all erected within eleven months. This is only a slight sample of our progress here in the West."

Today, it is hard to comprehend that Fairbury was considered to be in the "West." However, in the 1858 era, people on the East Coast thought of Illinois as being in the West. Whoever wrote and sent these letters to the newspaper editors was interested in promoting Fairbury and getting more people to move there.

The primary real estate developers in 1858 were A. J. Cropsey, William T. Stackpole, and John and Henry Marsh. Any of these four gentlemen could have sponsored the writing and distribution of these letters. Letters were sent to the Pennsylvania newspapers, including Gettysburg, Wilkes-Barre, Brookville, and Philadelphia. Other cities that received letters were Richmond, Virginia; Troy, Alabama; Boston, Massachusetts; Augusta, Georgia; and Cleveland, Ohio.

It is fascinating that this same letter was sent to three towns in England, including Leicester, Leeds, and Colchester, and another copy was sent to Dublin, Ireland.

In 1862, John and his son Henry Marsh discovered coal one mile west of Fairbury. This event marked the first time that coal was found in Illinois, and it started the Illinois coal mining industry. Word of this coal discovery in Fairbury quickly spread around the world. For example, the Christian Watchman in Boston, Massachusetts, published a story in May of 1863. The article reported that geologists were surprised that Illinois had vast coal fields. This article also stated, "A mine just opened at Fairbury, in the center of the grand prairie, near the Peoria and Logansport Railroad, and midway between the two branches of the Illinois Central road, is thought to be, in intrinsic value, equal to any mine of the kind in the West."

Emigrants from Scotland, Ireland, and England flocked to Fairbury to find coal mining jobs. The population skyrocketed from 262 people in 1860 to 1,493 citizens in 1870 and 2,140 residents in 1880.

A. J. Cropsey was the first settler in what is now Cropsey, Illinois. He was a Civil War hero and was the leader of the Illinois 129th Infantry Company E. After the Civil War ended, Mr. Cropsey decided to sell his Illinois land and move to Lincoln, Nebraska. Mr. Cropsey ran advertisements in several Ohio newspapers, offering his property for sale in 1866 and 1867. After he sold his holdings in the Fairbury area, A. J. Cropsey built a beautiful house in Lincoln, Nebraska. He was one of the major real estate developers in the Lincoln area. The village of Cropsey and Cropsey Township are named after A. J. Cropsey.

In 1867, the three Barnard brothers from New York decided that sheep could be raised on Fairbury farms and built a wool mill in Fairbury. In May of 1867, the Barnard brothers ran an ad in the Chicago Tribune employment section. They needed a foreman who understood weaving and spinning for their Fairbury Woollen Factory.

Unfortunately, the Barnard brothers did not understand Illinois geology and farming. The glaciers flattened the ground in the Ice Age 10,000 years ago and left very rich soil. The bad news was that the flat land made it impossible for rainwater to run off the ground easily. The Fairbury area was swampland and, for that reason, was the last part of Illinois to be settled. The swamp problem was not solved until the 1880s when clay drainage tile allowed rainwater to be drained from the land.

When the Barnard brothers tried to raise sheep, the sheep contracted the "foot rot" disease from the swampy land. This disease made sheep raising entirely profitless. The new Fairbury Woollen Factory was sold to Sacriste and Son. They continued to lose money and gave up. The machinery in the mill was sold and moved to California, where sheep could be profitably raised. The building was carried away piece by piece until it was gone.

In the summer of 1869, the Muscatine, Iowa, newspaper reported that most of the land east of Peoria was flooded from significant rain. The newspaper reported that half of the town of Piper City was covered with water. The water was deep enough at Gilman to float an Illinois River steamer. At Fairbury, 200 feet of Indian Creek bridges were gone.

Also, in 1869, Major Powell left on his expedition to explore the Colorado River. The country was shocked to learn that Powell's entire party was wiped out, with only one survivor. The survivor, John A. Risdon, was on horseback on the shore when the party's boat sunk in the Colorado River. Risdon reported that two un-named Fairbury men were lost in the expedition. It turned out that Risdon's report was a complete lie, and Major Powell survived his Colorado expedition. It is unknown why Risdon included Fairbury in his tall tale.

Each year, more old newspapers are digitized. Once they are scanned, they can be easily searched for historical information. Thus, future researchers will have access to more Fairbury-related stories published before 1871.

GROWTH OF A WESTERN VILLAGE.—A letter from Fairbury, Illinois, says:

Last November there was but one house here, now there are over forty dwelling, seven stores, three warehouses, a church, school house, railway depot, steam mill and other buildings—all erected within eleven months. This is only a slight sample of our progress here in the west.

Letter sent to newspapers around the world in 1858 to encourage people to move to Fairbury. It was likely written and sent to the newspapers by one of Fairbury's early real-estate developers.

CHAPTER 18

Farmers Have a Long History of Cooperation

Farming was very labor-intensive until the 1940s, when tractors with internal combustion engines replaced horses. In 1917, the average farm in Livingston County was only 160 acres in size. Farm families usually had many children to help with all the labor involved in operating early farms.

In 2009, the Woodford Journal published two stories written by 84-year-old Calvin Hartter (1924-2020), who farmed in the Eureka area. His two articles focused on farming methods starting in the 1930s.

Hartter recounted that in the 1930s, oats were a main crop. Oat seeds were sown in March into old corn stalks and then disked into the ground. Oats were good feed for horses, growing pigs, and, of course, oatmeal for humans.

Oats were harvested in early July with a binder. Three or four horses pulled the binder. This machine cut the stems and tied them into bundles of about 20 pounds. When 10 or 11 bundles of oats were done, they were dropped onto the ground. Humans had to move the bundles into shocks. The shocked oats were then dried in the field for a few weeks.

In August, neighbors got together and went from farm to farm, threshing oats. Steam engines powered some of the threshing machines. The threshing machine was set up in the farm yard, and horses would pull rack wagons of oats bundles to the machine. The machine separated the oats from the straw. The straw was often used to make a stack for a livestock shelter in the winter. The clean and dried oats were scooped into wood bins for storage. The grain market price for oats was about 25 cents per bushel. This price is equivalent to $5.65 in today's dollars.

Hartter recounted that the event of farmers banding together to help each other harvest oats was called a "threshing run." These threshing runs lasted for two or three weeks. Dinners were served every noon by the family whose farm they were at. These big feeds for a bunch of hungry, dirty men, maybe as many as 40, generally two tables full. After harvesting was

over, there was a big celebration of homemade ice cream for all, whether it was a good harvest or not.

Threshing run groups were prevalent in Livingston County before combines were invented. A search of the Pantagraph archives found 1,031 articles about threshing runs. The Fairbury Blade newspaper has 62 articles about threshing runs in the Fairbury area.

One of the best articles describing how a threshing run group operated was published in a 1941 Pantagraph article. This article focused on the oldest threshing run group in Livingston County, the Banner Threshing Run. The group was named after the Banner Country School, four miles southwest of Saunemin.

This group was formed in 1896, so by the time of the 1941 Pantagraph article, it had been in existence for 45 years. The group had 15 members, and it covered farms west of Saunemin, running west to land tenant-farmed by Adam Skrobonak (1888-1976) northwest of Fairbury. In 1941, the members of the Banner Threshing Run included Adam Skrobonak, Fred Immke, William Attig, Frank Pritchard, Adam Skrobonak, Ed Miller, Henry Immke, Charles Friesleben, LeRoy Tronc, Alvia Immke, Harry Vitzhum, Chris Jensen, John Miller, Carl Schauble Sr., and Carl Schauble Jr.

The group's bylaws stated that a minimum of 10 racks and six pitchers must always be ready for service. The ring confined its activities to the two sections south and west of Banner School. The crew ate dinner and supper where they were threshing, allowing 23 minutes for the noon meal. After all the oats were threshed, a picnic was held at Banner Country School.

In 1941, the group started harvesting oats at the Fred Immke farm on July 16, and they finished on July 30 on land farmed by Adam Skrobonak. For the 1941 harvest season, a total of 38,372 bushels of oats were threshed from 757 acres. The daily average was 3,837 bushels, and the average per acre was 50.7 bushels. The two highest yields were at the LeRoy Tronc farm (62.3 bushels) and the Chris Jensen Farm (58.7 bushels).

This group was very well organized and had a President and Secretary. They kept records and had an annual business meeting. This threshing run

group operated on a pro-rating system. Each man got 7 cents per 100 pounds of oats threshed and 9 cents if he used a team or truck. (If member A made more threshing on the farm of member B, that member B made on the farm of member A, then member A paid member B the difference). Pro-rating settlements were made at the annual business meeting.

Charles Menees (1916-1993), the Pantagraph reporter who wrote the 1941 article about the Banner Threshing Run group, was amazed that it had stayed together for 45 years. Mr. Menees asked members of the group to explain why they got along so well.

Mort Winters, a long-time member of the group, stated, "Our members work the same when threshing for one as another. Not a one of us tries to shirk. If we do have a little chewing match, we have a meeting and settle it by a vote."

Fred Immke, a member for 36 years, stated, "If we hadn't had a nice bunch of fellows, we couldn't have stayed together this long."

The Banner Threshing Run group hired a man to provide the threshing machine. As of 1941, there had only been three threshers. Paul Coleman, the first thresher, retired and was followed for the next 13 years by Albert Womach. Dan Zehr threshed for the first time during the 1941 season.

As Calvin Hartter recounted in his 2009 newspaper article, threshing run groups ceased to exist once combines became prevalent in the 1960s. He recounted the combine could do the work of 20 men.

By the middle of the 1960s, Fairbury area farmers still helped each other with labor-intensive jobs. Farmers and their children would help neighbors shell eared corn, bale hay, bale straw, and walk beans to pull the weeds. Area farmers have a long history of banding together and helping each other.

This photograph was taken on July 26, 1941, at the John Law farm in Lodemia, northwest of Fairbury. The threshing rig owner was Dallas Morris. Standing from left-to-right are Clarence Francis Maley, Roy Friant, Shelton Tucker, Raymond Tavener, Frank Masterson, Bud Wink, Munroe Garland, Wayne Ziller Sr. and Wayne Ziller Jr., John Law, Clarence Friant, Walter Askew, unknown water boy, and Lon Britt. On the left hayrack is Eldon Askew and on the right hayrack is Ed Snider. Frank Webster is up in the barn.

CHAPTER 19

Interesting Twists of Life for Wells-Fargo Couple

Many years ago, Fairbury had a Wells Fargo office on Locust Street. A married couple often ran the Wells Fargo office for a few years. A few years ago, Ron Schlipf, a Fairbury resident, discovered a very interesting photo of the married couple that ran the Fairbury Wells Fargo office in 1914. This story traces this couple's fascinating life story before and after they ran the Wells Fargo office in Fairbury.

Marie Hankins was born north of Chatsworth on a farm on March 3, 1866. She was the daughter of Henry Hankins and Anna Franzen. Marie moved to Fairbury to live with her uncle's family when she was a young girl. Her uncle was Frank Franzen. Marie attended the Fairbury schools.

Marie married Fred Wright in 1891. He operated a billiard parlor in Fairbury. Fred and Marie Wright had two children: Daughter Avis E. Wright, born in 1893, and son James Fred Wright, born in 1903. Both children attended Fairbury schools. Avis had a pleasant and happy disposition and developed a large group of friends in Fairbury. Her brother James became a lawyer and worked in Chicago.

Herbert Eugene Woillard was born in Fairfield, Kentucky, in 1889. He was the son of Joseph P. and Lilly Woillard. Joseph Woillard emigrated from Belgium to Kentucky. H. E. Woillard came to Fairbury and was the Wells Fargo express agent.

Avis Wright met the new Wells Fargo express agent in Fairbury. In January 1913, at the age of 23, Herbert Woillard married Avis E. Wright. She was 19 years of age when she got married.

Herbert and Avis started their married life living in Fairbury. Avis helped him run the Fairbury Wells-Fargo office, which was located on Locust Street between Second and Third Streets, on the south side of Locust Street. Herbert joined the volunteer fire department. He was an excellent marksman and attended a shooting competition with Fairbury friends.

Herbert and a group of men went to Chicago for the 1915 automobile race, and they worked at the track directing spectators around the track.

In 1915, H. E. Woillard resigned from his position as a Wells Fargo express agent in Fairbury. Herbert took a new job with the Hudson Automobile Company in St. Louis. Around this time, after just three years of marriage, Herbert and Avis divorced. They had no children. Avis moved to Chicago, where her brother James was a lawyer.

In early 1919, Avis came down from Chicago to Fairbury to visit her ailing father. A month after her visit, her father, Fred Wright, died at the age of 54. Mr. Wright was buried in Graceland Cemetery in Fairbury.

By 1920, Herbert Woillard married Edna Miller. Herbert and Edna moved to Fort Worth, Texas. Herbert and Edna never had any children. Mr. Woillard lived to be 91 years of age and died in Texas.

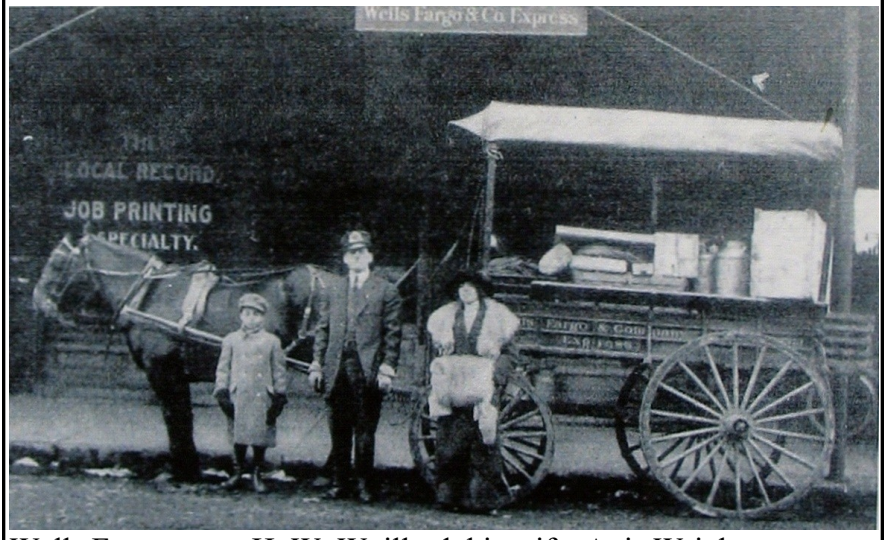
In 1921, Avis came down from Chicago and visited her mother in Fairbury. Mrs. Wright also traveled from Fairbury to visit her daughter Avis and her son James. Eventually, Mrs. Wright moved from Fairbury to Chicago, where her son, James Wright, was a lawyer.

In 1925, Avis married Joseph Harry Knee in Oregon. When they married, Avis was 32 years old, and Joseph was age 37. They eventually moved to the San Francisco area. After ten years of marriage, Mr. Knee died at the age of 47. Avis and Joseph had no children. Avis continued to live in the San Francisco area until she passed away in 1944.

Avis was just 50 years old when she died in San Francisco. The funeral home that handled her funeral noted the cause of death was "toxic degeneration of the liver." She was buried beside her second husband, Joseph Knee, in San Francisco. Because Avis grew up in Fairbury, the Blade newspaper published her obituary.

In 1913, Herbert Woillard and Avis Wright got married and had a bright future as Wells Fargo express agents in Fairbury. Herbert was a very active member of the Fairbury community during the three years he worked for Wells Fargo. He was a member of the Fairbury Volunteer Fire

Department. It is interesting to see the many twists and turns that life took for Herbert and Avis after they divorced and both left Fairbury.



Wells Fargo agent H. W. Woillard, his wife, Avis Wright - Woillard as clerk, and young "mascot" James Wright, younger brother of Avis. The Wells Fargo office was on the south side of Locust Street between Second and Third Streets. Old photo from the Wells Fargo Messenger newsletter dated March of 1914.

CHAPTER 20

Fairbury's Shrewdest Land Speculator

The Beach family played an essential role in early Fairbury history. Their story began with the birth of Lorenzo Beach in 1798 in New Haven, Vermont. Lorenzo was the son of Obil Beach (1758-1846) and Elizabeth Kilbourne (1765-1829).

In 1813, when Lorenzo Beach was 15 years old, he moved to Ohio and joined his brother, Uri Beach, who had come to Worthington, Ohio, one year earlier. Lorenzo attended local schools. In 1816, Lorenzo started to study medicine in Worthington. He then went to Urbana, Ohio, and attended medical classes taught by Doctor Carter and Doctor Musgrove. Lorenzo was in a class of ten students and received a certificate for completing his medical education. Lorenzo made a friend in medical school, James Comstock.

Around 1818, Dr. Lorenzo Beach and Dr. James Comstock began their medical practices in Amity, Ohio. In that era, medical doctors traveled by horse and buggy to see their patients from a 30-mile radius of where the doctor lived. In 1824, Dr. Lorenzo Beach married Miss Edith Bull. He was 26, and she was 22 when they married. They had five children.

In about 1833, Dr. Beach decided he did not make enough money as a doctor, so he switched his career to investing in farmland and trading livestock. He became the largest landowner and largest trader of livestock in Darby Township in Ohio.

In 1850, Congress passed one of several Script Acts, which gave free land to veterans of past wars, including the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Indian Wars. The majority of the veterans were from the War of 1812. These War of 1812 veterans were over 55 years of age and living on the East Coast when the 1850 Script Act was passed. They had no desire to move to the swampy lands in Central Illinois, so they sold their military land patent rights to speculators and farmers who did want the land. In the 1850s, the official price to purchase land in Illinois from the federal

government was $2.50 per acre. Veterans sold their military land patents for about 10 cents on the dollar to the official government price.

Very few settlers came to the Fairbury area between 1830 and 1853 because the land was swampy, and there needed to be railroads to bring supplies and take out grain. It took a few years for the 1850 Script Act to be implemented. The result was a land rush to the Fairbury area. Instead of paying the official government price of $2.50 per acre, settlers could buy military land patents from veterans for about 30 cents an acre. Between 1853 and 1860, all of the land in the Fairbury area was claimed. Much of this land was purchased using military veteran land patents.

In 1853, Ohio land prices increased to about $35 per acre, and Dr. Beach started selling all of his Ohio land holdings at this price range. According to the 1936 book The Ancestry and Posterity of Obil Beach by Fairbury historian Alma Lewis James, Dr. Beach discovered that he could buy Central Illinois farmland at only 30 cents an acre if he bought military veteran land patents. He could also pay only $2.50 per acre cash to purchase land.

Although several historical sources state that military veterans sold their land patent rights for about ten cents on the dollar, this 1936 book documents that Dr. Lorenzo Beach paid 30 cents an acre to buy these rights. The price of 30 cents an acre equals paying 12 cents on the dollar of the official federal land price of $2.50 an acre.

The U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management maintains a website that records who initially bought land from the federal government. The information in this database indicates that Dr. Lorenzo Beach made 38 different land purchases. Between 1854 and 1867, he purchased 5,773 acres in Livingston, McLean, and Kankakee counties.

Dr. Beach purchased 3,210 acres in McLean County, 1,083 acres in Livingston County, and 1,480 acres in Kankakee County. Dr. Lorenzo Beach used military veteran land patents to buy 720 of the 5,773 acres he purchased, and he paid cash for the rest of the acres.

In 1869, Edith Beach died at the age of 67 in Fairbury. Dr. Lorenzo Beach was 70 when his wife died. Two years later, in 1871, Dr. Lorenzo Beach

married Sarah A. Roop. Lorenzo Beach was 73, and Sarah was 77 when they married.

Dr. Lorenzo Beach died at the age of 81 in 1878 in Fairbury. A structural disease of the heart caused his death. He was buried in Graceland Cemetery.

In the decade after Dr. Lorenzo Beach died, all of the farmland in the Fairbury area was permanently drained using the new invention of clay field tile. Draining the land using field tile converted Fairbury farmland from swampland to some of the most productive lands on the planet. The value of cropland went up tenfold after tiling because so many good crops could be raised yearly.

In today's dollars, the 5,773 acres Dr. Lorenzo Beach purchased in the 1850s would be worth $115 million at a current market price of $20,000 per acre.

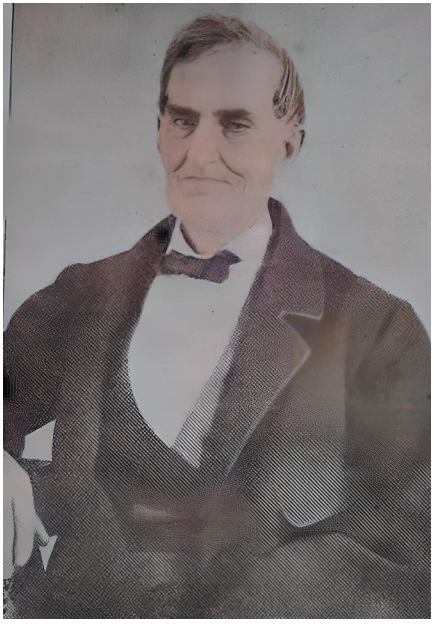
The descendants of Dr. Lorenzo Beach played essential roles in early Fairbury history. Thomas A. Beach (1828-1911), son of Dr. Lorenzo Beach, became a businessman and banker worth over $50 million in today's dollars when he died in 1911. He built the Beach House in 1872 at 402 E. Hickory Street. This home is on the National Register of Historic Places. The Beach family also built their family mausoleum at Graceland Cemetery.

Lorenzo Beach Dominy (1844-1902), grandson of Dr. Lorenzo Beach, was the first mayor of Fairbury. He started the Dominy Memorial Library in memory of his daughter, Hazel Dominy, who died when she was just 17 years old.

Dr. George C. Lewis (1856-1932) married Ella Beach (1862-1939), granddaughter of Dr. Lorenzo Beach. Dr. Lewis delivered over 1,000 Fairbury babies during his 28-year medical practice. Dr. Lewis and his wife, Ella, were philanthropists who donated the land the Prairie-Central High School now stands on. The athletic field at the high school was named Lewis Field in memory of Dr. Lewis and his wife.

Alma Lewis James was the great-granddaughter of Dr. Lorenzo Beach. Alma became a Fairbury historian and wrote the book ***Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars***, which documents Fairbury's history from 1857 until 1900.

Dr. Lorenzo Beach was Fairbury's shrewdest land speculator. He recognized he could sell his Ohio farmland at relatively high prices and then buy Fairbury area farmland at relatively low prices. The Fairbury farmland he purchased in the 1850s is now worth millions of dollars.



Dr. Lorenzo Beach

CHAPTER 21

Fairbury Earthquake History

Most Fairbury citizens do not think they live in an earthquake-prone area compared to California. However, Fairbury has experienced seven earthquakes with a magnitude greater than 5.0 on the Richter scale. The Fairbury area experienced the most tremendous earthquake in the history of the continental United States, with an 8.0 reading in 1811.

The earth is comprised of large earthen plates that float on a sea of underground molten magma. Occasionally, two of these plates collide and cause a sudden and violent shaking of the ground. If these movements in the earth's crust are large enough, they can cause extensive damage to man-made structures.

The San Andreas fault in California is a well-known place where two different earthen plates meet, resulting in many earthquakes. The New Madrid Fault in Missouri, also called the New Madrid seismic zone, is a series of faults, or fractures, at a weak spot in the earth's crust called the Reelfoot Rift. It lies deep in the ground and cannot be seen from the surface. The fault line runs roughly 150 miles from Arkansas into Missouri and Illinois.

In the Fall of 1811, the most severe earthquake ever recorded in the continental U.S. occurred in the New Madrid Fault. Three earthquakes occurred in the Fall of 1811 and Spring of 1812, and they all registered over 8.0 on the Richter scale. The earth shook so hard that it rang the church bells in Boston and temporarily reversed the course of the Mississippi River.

Valentine Darnall was the first pioneer settler in the Fairbury area in 1830. When the massive earthquakes occurred in 1811 and 1812, the only people who experienced them in the Fairbury area were the Kickapoo tribe of Native Americans.

The next major earthquake in the Fairbury area occurred on June 9, 1838, and it registered 5.2 on the Richter scale. At that time, less than 50 pioneer

settlers lived in this area. Neither the Pantagraph nor Blade newspapers were yet in existence. Other newspapers noted the trembling of the earth was felt in St. Louis, Vandalia, and Terre Haute, Indiana.

After 1838, the next major earthquake was felt in Fairbury 53 years later, in 1891. It measured 5.2 on the Richter scale. Many citizens were awakened from their sleep when the first significant tremble rocked their beds around 11 p.m. There were many reports of windows, blinds, and doors rattling. In many cases, the man of the household grabbed his gun and started to search his home for burglars. No significant building damage was reported.

Just four years later, in 1895, a slightly larger earthquake with a magnitude of 5.9 on the Richter scale was felt in Fairbury. Since most citizens had experienced the 1891 earthquake, not as many citizens were baffled by the 1895 quake. Citizens were again woken from their sleep, and the plates rattled on their shelves as the earth rocked. No structural damage was reported.

Modern geologists theorize that Central Illinois is protected from the extensive motion of the earth because the crushed rock from the glaciers under our soil dampens the earthquake motions. Some areas around Pontiac sit on solid limestone, which would experience more rocking motion than others.

In 1909, another earthquake with a magnitude of 5.4 occurred. The Pantagraph published a short article about it and reported no significant damage. The Blade did not have an earthquake story.

The next earthquake in 1917 had a similar magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale. As in 1909, the Pantagraph had a small earthquake article, and the Blade published no story.

The Pantagraph had a more extensive article about the 5.3 magnitude earthquake in 1968. The Pantagraph reported no significant damage, and the Blade had no story.

Just four years later, in 1972, this area experienced a 4.0 earthquake. The Pantagraph noted that many Illinois Wesleyan students had never

experienced an earthquake before. These students flooded the police department with phone calls.

In 1987, a 5.0-magnitude quake was felt in the Bloomington, Fairbury, and Peoria areas. One Fairbury citizen was attending a class at ICC Junior College in East Peoria when the earthquake occurred. This citizen's chair felt like it had been kicked, and the hanging projector screen started swaying for a minute or so. No significant structural damage was reported.

In 2004, an earthquake with a magnitude of 4.2 did not originate at the New Madrid Fault line. Instead, it originated about 30 miles north of Streator. Blade reporter Sharon Shifflet was awakened by her windows rattling and her bed rocking.

The last earthquake with a magnitude above 5.0 on the Richter scale occurred in 2008, measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale. The Pantagraph published an extensive story about earthquake history in central Illinois. No significant damage was reported.

Unfortunately, scientists can still not predict when and where future earthquakes will occur. Since 8.0-magnitude earthquakes occurred in the New Madrid Fault Zone in 1811 and 1812, it is possible we could see another 8.0-magnitude quake in the future generated from that fault line. In 1985, an 8.0 earthquake leveled all the buildings in Mexico City. Most of the buildings and homes in Fairbury would likely experience significant damage if we ever have another 8.0-magnitude earthquake.

Powerful earthquakes can damage buildings and houses.

CHAPTER 22

Many Unusual Items at Fairbury Echoes Museum

The Fairbury Echoes Museum's holdings include some very unusual items. The most unique one is a wreath sculpture made from human hair in the 1870s. In that era, hair wreaths were created from the hair of deceased loved ones as an honor and remembrance item. Mattie Jones and her sister Luvena painstakingly handcrafted the wreath in the museum.

Another very unusual item in the museum is an 1863 Civil War poster. This poster honors the Illinois 129th Infantry Company E, which was comprised of all Fairbury area men. Their Lieutenant Colonel was A. J. Cropsey. Mr. Cropsey was an early real estate developer in Fairbury. Both Cropsey Township and the village of Cropsey are named after him.

Internet searches revealed relatively few of these types of posters were created. Desertion was a significant problem during the Civil War because soldiers could quit and walk home. This poster may have been made during the Civil War to instill pride in their unit and discourage desertion. Relatively few Fairbury men deserted from Company E during the Civil War.

Levi Judson Odell (1855-1919) was a prolific inventor and businessman. Over his lifetime, Mr. Odell invented and manufactured three different product lines. His first product was check row corn planters. In the 1880s, farmers would string a rope line down their fields. The horse-drawn corn planter would drop a seed every time the planter encountered a knot in the rope. Mr. Odell manufactured his check row corn planter in Fairbury until his factory burned down.

Mr. Odell's second invention was an early version of the typewriter. Odell's unique design was advertised as capable of typing 60 words per minute. Mr. Odell sold several million typewriters until a different design won the contest and became the standard design. One of Mr. Odell's unique typewriters is on permanent display at the museum.

Levi Odell's third product line was shaving razors for women. He established a large factory in California and manufactured these razors for many years. One of these women's razors is also on permanent display in the museum.

Mr. Odell made the national newspapers while operating the California razor factory. A beautiful young lady applied for a job in his razor factory. Regular job interviews were conducted in one session. Mr. Odell interviewed this young lady three times. After the third interview, Mr. Odell told the job candidate the only way she could get a job in his factory was to marry him. This story made the national newspapers.

There was just one problem with this story. The problem was that Mr. Odell was still married to his first wife when he proposed to the young job applicant. Historical research found no marriage record, and a few years later, the young lady had moved back home with her parents.

In the early 1900s, Fairbury was still a pretty wild town. In that era, two City Marshals were murdered in the line of duty. In 1899, Sam Rightsell refused to pay Dr. Thatcher's $30 medical bill. Dr. Thatcher obtained a judgment against Mr. Rightsell. The judge directed the Fairbury authorities to sell Mr. Rightsell's animals to pay the doctor's bill. When Mr. Rightsell was not home, City Marshal Joseph Galloway took Rightsell's horse and cow to a livery stable to sell. Upon returning home and finding the authorities had removed his livestock, Mr. Rightsell purchased ammunition and decided to shoot Marshal Galloway.

Mr. Rightsell confronted Marshal Galloway and tried to shoot him, but his gun would not fire. Marshal Galloway shot and wounded Mr. Rightsell in the leg. Mr. Rightsell limped into the basement of the large house at the southwest corner of Walnut and Fifth Streets. The house occupants phoned the Fairbury police, and Marshall Fred Baird was dispatched to the home. Marshal Baird knew nothing about the previous altercation between Marshal Galloway and Sam Rightsell. When Marshal Baird started down the basement stairs, Sam Rightsell shot and killed Marshal Baird.

The Blade published a sketch of Fred Baird, but the quality of this sketch is inferior. In 2016, an artist was hired to draw a new portrait of Fred Baird

using the old Blade sketch. The artist did an excellent job, and the picture of Fred Baird is permanently displayed in the museum.

Carl Goudy and his brother William Goudy were world-class motorcycle racers in the 1908 to 1911 era. Both brothers were eventually inducted into the American Motorcycle Association Hall of Fame. In late 1910, Carl Goudy won the Chicago motorcycle race, the most prestigious motorcycle race in the world. After the race, Carl loaned his fast motorcycle to his brother. Will Goudy took the bike to California to race it. One day, Will Goudy and another professional driver were doing practice laps on the California track. A third professional driver entered the track and passed Will and the other racer. Unfortunately, the third racer dumped his motorcycle in front of Will and the other racer. To avoid running over the fallen driver and his bike, Will swerved one way, and the other driver swerved in the other direction. Both Will and the other racer were instantly killed when they struck objects on the edge of the track.

After the accident, Carl Goudy's Fairbury girlfriend told him that she would not marry him unless he gave up motorcycle racing. Carl followed her wishes and gave up motorcycle racing. The wedding dress of Hazel Dominy Bane, Carl's girlfriend, is on permanent display in the museum. A restored wedding photograph of Carl and Hazel Goudy is also on display.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum has many more unusual and unique items. In the summer months, the museum is open to the public on Thursdays and Fridays from one to four PM and Saturdays from nine to 11 AM. The museum observes its winter schedule in January each year and is open on Saturdays from nine to 11 AM. There is no admission charge for visiting the museum.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum is located at 126 West Locust Street. Normal visiting hours are from 1 to 4 PM on Thursdays and Fridays, and 9 to 11 AM on Saturdays In January and February, hours are 9 to 11 AM on Saturdays.

CHAPTER 23

Hobos Part of Fairbury Life in the Great Depression

Webster's dictionary defines a hobo as a very poor person who has no permanent residence and travels from place to place, especially by furtively hopping trains. Almost as soon as railroads were introduced in America, people started to get free rides by riding on train cars. After the Civil War, many soldiers returned home by jumping onto a freight train instead of walking all the way.

Wikipedia states that a hobo travels and is willing to work. A tramp travels but avoids work if possible. A bum neither travels nor works.

Hobos traveled on Illinois railroads in the early 1900s. Railroads often employed people to remove the hobos from their yards.

The Great Depression began when the U.S. stock market collapsed on "Black Thursday," October 24, 1929. Millions of people were thrown out of work, and the unemployment rate reached 25 percent. This economic downturn lasted about a decade and did not really end until Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. This Japanese attack marked the start of America's involvement in World War II.

Many men during the Great Depression were unemployed and decided to become hobos, riding the trains to distant towns to look for temporary work. Hobos often traveled through Fairbury in the 1930s.

Early steam locomotives needed to stop and replenish their water every seven to ten miles. The TP&W built a refueling station just west of where the railroad crosses Indian Creek on the east end of Locust Street. The railroad installed a dam on Indian Creek to retain water for the steam locomotives. The refueling station had a water tank and either wood or coal to operate the locomotives. This refueling station no longer exists, but at least one old photograph documents the station's design.

Refueling stations along railroads were popular points for hobos to spend the night. Descendants of one family who lived on the east end of Locust Street have a family lore story that local Fairbury residents called the area around the Indian Creek and Locust Street intersection Hobo Island. No supporting documentation about Hobo Island could be found in the Blade archives. It would not be surprising to discover that this story is true since hobos often congregated around railroad refueling stations.

In the early 1900s, Fairbury area farmers drove their livestock to a TP&W livestock loading station on the south side of Locust Street between Sixth and Seventh Streets. The loading station was a wooden structure elevated above ground level so the livestock could be driven directly into the railroad cars. This loading station is shown on the 1924 Sanborn map of Fairbury.

Eventually, farmers began sending their livestock to market using trucks instead of railroads. In May 1936, the TP&W Railroad sent out a work crew to significantly reduce the size of the livestock loading area since it was rarely used. The Blade published a story with the heading "Break up Hobos' Paradise." The railroad workers discovered the hobos had built a retreat under the livestock loading ramps, which had been there for several years.

The Blade recounted that this hotel for weary travelers was located under the cattle sheds. While it did not have hardwood floors, electric lights, or running water, it was very comfortably equipped for their sojourns in Fairbury, and with the exception of extreme cold, they found it most inviting.

When the TP&W workers arrived to tear down the old cattle sheds, they found seven weary brethren enjoying their morning meal. When one of these hobos inquired about what was taking place, the foreman of the TP&W crew informed them that Mr. McNear, president of the railroad, was not satisfied with their living quarters and was going to build them a new hotel.

While the workmen were tearing down the shed, the "knights of the road" continued with their morning repast and did not move until some of the boards started to rattle on their table.

In September of 1933, the Blade published a story with the heading "Dog Joins Up with Tramp Befriender." That week, a hobo was arrested and spent the night in the Fairbury jail. The two metal jail cells are still located in the southwest corner of Old City Hall.

When the hobo got out of jail, he noticed that someone had cruelly tied a tin can using a rope to a dog's tail. The poor dog ran down Main Street and yelped with pain and fright. After some persuasion, the hobo convinced the dog that he was trying to befriend him, and he allowed the hobo to remove the rope and tin can from the dog.

A couple of hours after the hobo rescued the dog, the hobo and the dog were observed trudging along Route 24, a mile east of Fairbury. The dog had become the hobo's pal and was apparently enjoying the company of his new master.

In July of 1973, Perry Burroughs, a Fairbury resident, retired from a career on the TP&W Railroad. Perry was interviewed by the Blade, and an extensive article was published about his retirement.

In his retirement story, Perry recounted that besides the old telegraph key, another thing that disappeared from railroading was hobos. Perry said, "We just don't see them on trains anymore. But gosh, during the 1930s, sometimes there would be 20 or 30 of them hop off a train when it came into town, especially at the junctions I worked, like El Paso and Sheldon."

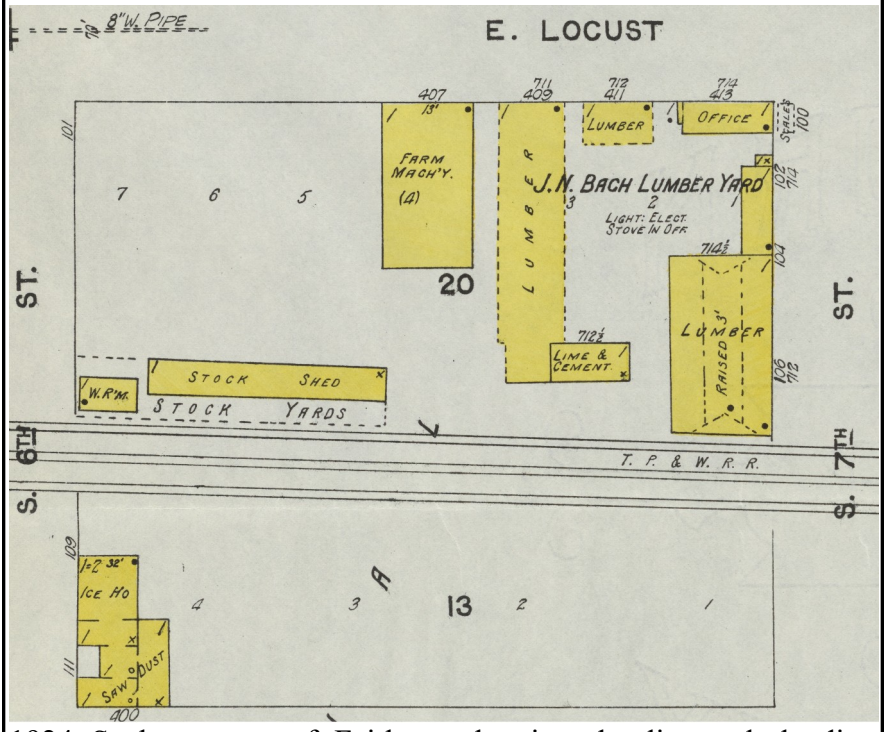
"They didn't board and unload right in front of the depot, but you could see them back aways, where they figured the freights might be slowing down. The hobos often congregated where trains had to take on water and coal."

Perry recalled that the edge of most towns had a hobo "jungle" along the tracks at one end of the town or other. Here, the Knights of the Road, as they were sometimes romantically referred to, would also assemble various donations of potatoes, meat, and vegetables they might collect or buy with nickels and dimes they panhandled and brew a pot of Mulligan stew over a campfire in those Great Depression days.

The Blade article noted that for the present-day record, it might be well to note that while "Knights of the Road" was a romantic reference, there was hardly anything romantic about riding in the dust kicked up by a freight train.

"The saddest sight I ever saw," Perry mused, "was a man, a woman, and a child about two years old riding a box car."

When World War II began, jobs were plentiful in factories making war supplies. After the war, diesel locomotives replaced the steam locomotives. The diesel locomotives required no refueling stops and traveled much faster than the old steam locomotive trains. These changes prompted the end of the major Hobo period in America.



1924 Sanborn map of Fairbury showing the livestock loading station on the north side of the railroad tracks between 6th and 7th Streets. During the Great Depression, hobos built a hotel under the livestock loading structure. The "Hobo Hotel" was removed by the TP&W railroad in 1936.

A 1930s era photograph of the TP&W refueling station that was located just west of the Locust Street bridge over Indian Creek. This photo was published in the April 18, 1974 Blade newspaper and was provided by former TP&W worker Leo R. Clark. Because freight trains had to stop at this station, it is likely that hobos boarded and got off TP&W freight trains passing through Fairbury during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

CHAPTER 24

Best Athletes in Fairbury's History

A historical review of the best athletes who ever lived in Fairbury yields four names. These four men include Thomas "Don" Karnes (1902-1982), Richard Alfonse "Dick" McAllister (1879-1967), Nelse Wesley "Wes" Hanson (1889-1961), and George A. Decker (1869-1909).

Don Karnes was born in Fairbury in 1902. He grew up on South Third Street, just a few houses north of the fairgrounds. He attended Fairbury schools. Don was a star athlete at Fairbury Township High School. He lettered on the undefeated football team of 1917 and captained the 1919 team. The 1918 season was canceled because of the influenza epidemic during World War I. After high school graduation, he worked one year on the railroad to earn money for college. Karnes enrolled at the University of Illinois at Urbana in the fall of 1921 and graduated in June 1925.

Red Grange, born in 1903, was just one year younger than Don Karnes. Red Grange was arguably the best football player to ever play for the University of Illinois football team. In his biggest college game, he scored five touchdowns against the arch-rival Michigan team. Red went on to play for the Chicago Bears and helped start the National Football League. Don Karnes played on the same football team with Red Grange at the University of Illinois. Don suffered a knee injury, which ended his football career.

Don Karnes made the University of Illinois varsity basketball team as a sophomore for the 1922-23 season. He played the forward position. Don continued to play basketball for the University of Illinois and lettered in basketball.

After graduating from the University of Illinois and lettering in basketball, Don Karnes accepted the head football coach job at Illinois State Normal University in Normal, Illinois. He was the youngest man to act as a head coach for a major college. He served as the head football coach for two

seasons, from 1925 to 1926. Karnes was also the head basketball coach at Illinois State from 1925 to 1927.

Don worked most of his career in the insurance industry. After retirement, Karnes continued to be interested in athletics. He traveled to every Olympic Games after World War II, except the 1980 games in Russia, which were boycotted. Don was a tireless spectator at Fairbury High School sports events. He helped several Fairbury students get into college. He also had a basketball court built at one of his Fairbury homes south of the Fairbury Hospital, so the local kids had a place to play basketball.

Upon his death in 1982, Karnes established a scholarship fund for Fairbury High School students. Each year, scholarships are awarded to local students. Karnes is remembered as one of Fairbury's sports celebrities who was also very generous to his hometown students.

Dick McAllister was born in Scotland in 1879. His parents moved the family from Scotland to Fairbury around 1881. John McAllister, the father of Dick McAllister, first took a job making bricks in Fairbury for Jeff Donahue. He then worked as a coal miner at three coal mines in Fairbury.

In 1886, John McAllister joined with a group of other coal miners and founded a new coal mine in Fairbury. It was the Cooperative Coal Company, and it was opened in 1886. It operated until 1941 and was located near the entrance to the Timber Ridge Subdivision in Fairbury.

Dick McAllister was only six years old when his mother died. He completed grades one through seven in the Fairbury schools. When Dick was age thirteen in l892, he started working in the Fairbury coal mines with his father. Dick McAllister grew to become a very physically large man in adulthood.

Because of his physical stature, R. A. McAllister became an outstanding football player. Between about 1900 and 1910, he played the position of tackle on several football-for-pay teams. He played football weekend games in Peru, Chicago, and Peoria. In this era, he was considered one of the best tackles in the State of Illinois.

Dick McAllister died at age eighty-seven in 1967 in Fairbury. The Editor of the Blade noted that McAllister was a long-time colorful and sometimes controversial figure in Fairbury history. During his lifetime, he started working in the coal mines at age thirteen, played professional football before there was a National Football League, became a Fairbury Alderman, ran for state political office, was appointed Fairbury Postmaster, served as Secretary for the United Mine Workers and was a coal mine inspector. He accomplished many things with only a seventh-grade education.

When his family moved to Fairbury, Wes Hanson was ten years old. He attended local schools through the eighth grade. Wes Hanson was a naturally gifted athlete. As a youth, he enjoyed skating, baseball, basketball, and swimming. Starting around 1910, Wes played on men's basketball teams, including the Bon Ton Limits from Fairbury.

In 1914, Wes Hanson and Carl Goudy opened an Excelsior motorcycle dealership in Fairbury. Wes and Carl were good friends, and they played basketball together on the Bon Ton Limits team. The Bon Ton was a drugstore located west of the Langstaff Clinic on Locust Street. This drugstore sponsored a men's basketball team and named it after the drugstore. The team played their games in the Locust Street Opera House, which Steidinger Meats now occupies.

In 1916, Wes purchased a garage from Herman Lies. In 1919, Wes was awarded a Chevrolet dealership. Wes named his company the Fairbury Auto Company. After being awarded the Chevrolet dealership, Wes hired 13-year-old Spud Schlipf as a "gopher." A gopher meant the person would go for parts and things for the dealership. Spud eventually purchased the dealership in 1967. Spud is considered the "father" of Fairbury auto racing because he started the midget car races in 1946.

Wes Hanson was an exceptionally talented golfer. He was a charter member of the Indian Creek Golf Course when it was established in 1926. Wes was the annual champion at the Fairbury golf course for many years. Wes Hanson won the Bloomington City Championship in 1944. He captured the top title at the Pontiac Country Club every year from 1937 through 1945. Wes continued to participate in senior golf championships later in life.

George Decker attended Fairbury schools. His father was a store clerk and bookkeeper. The Deckers lived in a house on Oak Street. George A. Decker eventually grew to six feet, one inch, and 180 pounds. In 1888, at age 19, he started playing minor-league baseball. He played with various minor-league teams for four seasons.

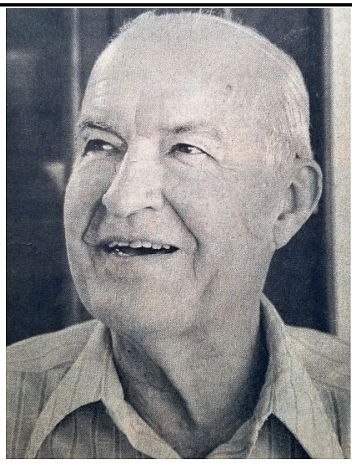
In the latter part of the 1892 season, Cap Anson recruited George A. Decker to join his Chicago Colts professional baseball team. George's best position was first base, but he played every other position on the team except pitcher and catcher. In 1906, the Chicago baseball team's nickname was changed from the Colts to the Cubs.

In 1892, George A. Decker made it to the big leagues in baseball and married Luella May Stafford from Fairbury. They were both 23 years old.

The Chicago Colts played an exhibition game in September 1895 in George's hometown of Fairbury. Over 2,000 fans attended this game. Three Fairbury men were on the home team, and the rest of the players came from neighboring towns. They played seven innings, with the Chicago Colts winning the game 27 to 4.

George A. Decker died in 1909 at the age of forty in Compton, California. George A. Decker was at the peak of his life in 1893 when he was twenty-four years old. At that point in his life, George had just made the big league in baseball, had just gotten married, and had a new infant son. Little did he know that his life would disintegrate during his remaining sixteen years. He lost his infant son, lost his young wife, had a baseball career that only lasted seven years, and would spend the last few years of his life in a California insane asylum.

All four of these men were exceptional athletes, and their stories are an important part of Fairbury's early history.



Don Karnes
(1902-1982)

Dick McAllister
(1879-1967)

Wes Hanson
(1889-1961)

George Decker
(1869-1909)

CHAPTER 25

The Skrobonak Family of Fairbury

Adam Skrobonak (1888-1976) was a well-known farmer in the northeast corner of Avoca Township for many years. One of his daughters was Mildred Skrobonak. She was well-known in the Fairbury area and is remembered for the 1954 pick-up truck she used to drive around Fairbury in the 1970s.

The story of the Skrobonak family began with Adam Skrobonak's birth in what is now Poland. Adam noted on his wedding license that Jacob Skrobonak and Katherine Ciprunska were his parents.

Poland has a very long history of being known by many different names. In 1888, when Adam Skrobonak was born, Poland was split into three areas associated with Russia, Prussia, and Austria. In 1918, Poland returned to being a designated separate country. In later years, Adam Skrobonak reported on U.S. Census reports that he was born in Poland, Russia. This area was in the eastern part of modern-day Poland.

Adam Skrobonak reported on the 1920 U.S. Census that he emigrated from Poland to Livingston County in 1905 when he was 17. It is very unusual for someone to emigrate from Poland to Livingston County. In the 1878 Livingston County history book, only one other person from Poland had emigrated to Livingston County.

Adam Skrobonak worked as a farm laborer and began working for Henry Immke Jr. (1882-1956) in 1909 when Adam was 21 years of age. In that era, Mr. Immke owned land in the northeast corner of Avoca Township.

In 1917, Adam Skrobonak filled out his World War I draft registration card. He reported that he was a laborer on the farm of Henry Immke Jr. in Fairbury and supported his mother and sister in Germany. The draft card official noted on Adam's registration that he had not provided any support to his mother and sister in Germany after World War I started.

Also, in 1917, Adam Skrobonak married Kathryn A. Branz. When they married in Livingston County, Adam was 28, and Kathryn was 25. Adam and Kathryn Skrobonak had three children.

Kathryn Branz's parents were Ernest J. Branz Sr. (1870-1951) and Minnie C. Schulz (1872-1945). Henry Immke Jr.'s wife was Anna E. Branz (1890-1951). Anna's mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Schulz (1867-1946). Adam Skrobonak's wife was a first cousin of the wife of Henry Immke Jr.

Adam and Kathryn Skrobonak's first child was born in 1919. They named their son Ernest William Skrobonak. Ernest Skrobonak never married.

In the 1920 Census, the Adam Skrobonak family lived in Avoca Township. Adam, who was 32, was a general farming laborer. He rented his house and lived with his wife Kathryn and son Ernest Skrobonak. One year after the Census, daughter Mildred Minnie Skrobonak was born in Avoca Township. Mildred also never married.

In 1928, Evelyn Mae Skrobonak, the third child of Adam and Kathryn Skrobonak, was born in Avoca Township. In 1949, Evelyn married Everett Charles Ruff (1916-1998). Mr. Ruff was 33, and Evelyn was 19 when they married. Everett and Evelyn Ruff had four children and lived in McDowell.

In the 1930 Census, Adam reported being a farmer in Avoca Township. Members of the household were Adam, 39, Katherine, 38, Ernest, 11, Mildred, 9, and Evelyn, 1. The 1936 Daily Leader reported that Mildred Skrobonak had passed the County Test which enabled her to graduate from the 8th grade. Mildred did not continue her schooling after the eighth grade.

In October of 1940, Ernest Skrobonak filled out his World War II draft registration card. Ernest reported that he worked for his father, Adam Skrobonak. A 1942 newspaper article reported that Ernest had been drafted and went to Peoria with other Livingston County men to take their physical exams. No record could be found of Ernest Skrobonak serving in World War II.

When the 1940 Census was completed, Adam Skrobonak was still farming in Avoca Township. Adam reported that second grade was the highest level of schooling he had completed. Ernest reported he had completed the seventh grade, and Mildred reported she had finished the eighth grade.

In the 1940s, many Livingston County farmers grew oats to use as feed for their horses. Some farmers would band together and form a cooperative group called a "threshing run." In 1941, the Pantagraph ran an article about the oldest group of this type in Livingston County called the Banner Threshing Run. This group had been in existence for 45 years and was established in 1896. The members of this group included Adam Skrobonak, Fred Immke, William Attig, Frank Pritchard, Adam Skrobonak, Ed Miller, Henry Immke, Charles Friesleben, LeRoy Tronc, Alvia Immke, Harry Vitzhum, Chris Jensen, John Miller, Carl Schauble Sr., and Carl Schauble Jr.

Tenant Adam Skrobonak farmed in Section 12 of Avoca Township and rented a house on land owned by Chris Glinnen. The house was within one mile of the Vermilion River and had a long driveway to the nearest road to the north.

The 1943 Pantagraph published a story about the land tenant farmed by Adam Skrobonak being flooded three times in the same year. Their livestock was removed to a nearby farm. The Adam Skrobonak family was able to leave and go to town by having four horses pull a wagon down their long lane.

In the 1950 Census, Adam still farmed in Avoca Township. He was 59, and his wife Kathryn was 57. Ernest Skrobonak, age 30, and Mildred Skrobonak, age 28, still lived at home with their parents.

In 1951, Ernest Skrobonak started working as a maintenance employee at the Fairbury Fairgrounds. He continued working there until he died in 1971 when he was only 52. Mildred Skrobonak and her sister Evelyn Ruff also worked there.

In May of 1964, a crew of nine people planted 220,000 tomato plants on Jim Goold's 40-acre patch northwest of Fairbury. They put 5,500 tomato plants per acre 16 inches apart and in rows 66 inches wide. Jim rented a

unique planter to do the job. The helpers on the tomato planting crew were Lois Chapman, Karen Lake, Tom Hudson, Mary Bagley, Margaret Karr, Mildred Skrobonak, Evelyn Ruff, and Everett Ruff. Jack Taylor and Goold acted as tractor operators. The tomato crop was later harvested by 50 Mexican-Americans who lived on the Goold farm for 8 weeks.

Around 1966, the Adam Skrobonak family moved to a farm southwest of Fairbury near Indian Creek. According to a 1969 Pantagraph article, Mildred Skrobonak suffered a severe fracture of her right leg when a rock was thrown from a lawn mower she was operating. Mildred would have been 48 years old when this accident happened.

After her brother Ernest Skrobonak died in 1971, Mildred inherited his truck and drove it around Fairbury, including getting groceries at Dave's Supermarket. The truck was about a 1954 Chevrolet or GMC green pick-up with E. Skrobonak stenciled on the door. Mildred actually wore out the truck, and the K&S Fairbury dealership found her a used car to replace it.

Kathryn Skrobonak died in 1976 at the age of 84. Her husband, Adam Skrobonak, died 13 days later at the age of 87. They were buried in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

Dale Dameron (1927-2017) was a Fairbury plumber for many years. After a recent heavy ice storm, Mildred Skrobonak called him and said her house had no heat. Dale Dameron went to the farmhouse and found the furnace in the basement. He checked and found the chimney had no draw or draft required to run a furnace. Dale Dameron then went outdoors and looked up to see the chimney was completely blocked with ice, and the shingles were covered with ice. Dale Dameron explained the problem to Mildred and said he could only safely send any of his workers to fix the chimney once the ice melted.

Mildred then told Dale Dameron that she could solve the problem with the iced-up chimney. She went into the house and came out with her shotgun. Mildred shot the top of the chimney until the ice was cleared. Dale Dameron then got the furnace running, and the heat was restored to the house.

Mildred Skrobonak died in 2008 at Fairview Haven at the age of 86. She was buried in Graceland Cemetery. Her sister, Evelyn Ruff, died in 2018 at the age of 90.

The Skrobonak family was well-known for many decades in Avoca Township and Fairbury because of their many years of work at the Fairbury Fairgrounds. Everyone who met Mildred has their own unique story to tell about her because she was a very interesting woman.

Mildred Skrobonak always enjoyed gardening and she entered vegetables in many different Fairbury Fairs. This Pontiac Daily Leader photo was taken in 1988 and she was very proud of her large tomatoes she had grown that year in her garden.

CHAPTER 26

Impact of First Railroads

Before the first railroad lines were built in Livingston County in the 1850s, relatively few pioneer settlers came to the County and farmed. Two primary factors dramatically changed life in Livingston County in the 1850s: a new law passed by Congress and the introduction of railroads.

Valentine and Rachel Darnall were the first settlers in Livingston County. In 1830, they settled on Indian Creek south of present-day Fairbury. The land at that time was swampy, with prairie grass in the open areas and timber growing along the creeks and rivers.

Livingston County was formed in 1837. According to the U.S. Census, there were only 759 pioneer settlers residing in Livingston County in 1840. The County has 1,055 square miles of land. In 1840, there were only 0.72 people per square mile in Livingston County.

By 1850, there were 1,552 people living in Livingston County, which equates to 1.5 people per square mile of land.

Life was relatively difficult for the pioneer settlers who came from the 1830s to the 1850s. With no railroads, there was no way to bring in supplies needed for farming or ship out farm products. Pioneer farm families had to be completely self-sufficient.

In 1832, the William McDowell family emigrated from Sciota County, Ohio, to a location about six miles north of present-day Fairbury on the South Branch of the Vermilion River. There were no sawmills or stores to buy supplies for them to build a cabin.

The McDowells immediately proceeded to erect their cabin. The principal tool used in its construction was an axe. They brought with them a few panes of glass from Ohio for a window in the new cabin. None of their neighbors had any glass for windows in their log cabins.

The McDowells needed some flat boards for the frame of their window and the cabin door. The Kickapoo tribe at Oliver's Grove, about three miles south of present-day Chatsworth, had hand-hewn some logs into flat boards. The McDowells made a trade with the Kickapoo. The Kickapoo traded their flat boards for a supply of ammunition. The flat boards were transported 18 miles from Oliver's Grove to north of Fairbury with an ox team.

John Johnson was another pioneer settler who came to Rook's Creek, just west of Pontiac, in the 1830s. In the Fall of 1834, John Johnson and his sons killed 75 deer. They transported the deer skins and hams by wagon to Ottawa, where they sold them for $65. This amount is equivalent to $2,015 in today's dollars.

Pioneer farmers needed a way to mill their grain into flour, which could be used to make bread-related food products for the family to consume. Early farmers only had two choices of where to take their grain to be milled. the most popular choice was to haul it by oxen-drawn wagon to Green's Mill in Ottawa. This mill was opened in 1830 by John Green on the Fox River about five miles northwest of Ottawa. Farmers had to haul their grain from Livingston County about 60 miles to Green's Mill on the north side of the Illinois River. Farmers often had to wait a day or two before it was their turn to get their grain milled. Farmers going to Green's Mill usually did some "store trading" at stores in Ottawa.

The other option to get grain milled was a mill on Crow's Creek, south of Peoria. This mill was also about 60 miles from Livingston County. Mr. Francis J. Moore, another pioneer settler, recounted that his first trip to the mill on Crow's Creek took one week. Sometime later, a new mill was built at Wilmington, but it was about as far away as the mill on Crow's Creek. The first mill in Livingston County was built by Mr. Smith in Fairbury in about 1840. Mr. Smith's little mill was powered by horses and not by water.

According to the 1878 Livingston County history book, Martin A. Newman of Newtown Township was the pioneer merchant of the County. In 1847, he left his home in Ottawa and made a tour of Livingston County. Mr. Newman could not find a single store in the entire County. He decided to start a new business. He bought and fitted up a peddling wagon, filling it

with a great variety of merchandise, ranging from a needle to a wash tub. Once a month, Mr. Newman and his peddling wagon visited every family living in Livingston County. In exchange for his goods, Mr. Newman accepted deer skins, mink skins, ginseng root, feathers, and many other articles. Mr. Newman became a favorite of the early settlers, and he soon built up an extensive and lucrative business.

Thomas McDowell was one of the McDowell family, who were early settlers north of Fairbury. Mr. McDowell recounted that when he came to Avoca, there were but three settlements between the Wabash country in Indiana and this place. The people did their milling at Green's mill, on the Fox River, and their "store trading" at Ottawa. Mr. McDowell's first trip to mill his grain was to Green's Mill, which took four days. Mr. McDowell contracted with a neighbor to take 24 bushels of grain to mill and have it ground for which he received fifty bushels of corn, worth the enormous sum of ten cents per bushel.

Salt was a key ingredient for early pioneer settlers. With no refrigeration method available, the only way to preserve meat was to pack it in salt. The 1878 Livingston County history book notes several cases where pioneer settlers had to travel 100 miles to Chicago to buy salt. Some early pioneers took their grain to Chicago to sell, and some cattle herds were driven from Livingston County to Chicago for sale.

The Kring family were early settlers just north of Fairbury. John Kring recounted that he went on a trip to Chicago with his father. The elder Kring had one of the old-fashioned carriages, which cost him $600. They made the trip to Chicago in it, and while there, Mr. Kring was offered 160 acres of land in trade for the vehicle. As the land was under water, Mr. Kring decided he preferred the prairie of Livingston County. A few decades later, that 160 acres of land became downtown Chicago and was worth millions of dollars.

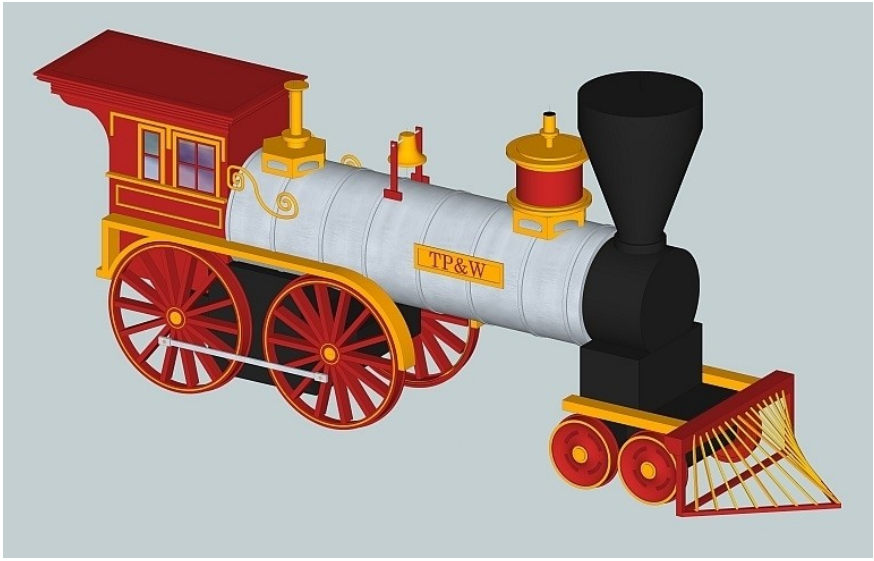
In 1850, Congress passed a Script Act, which awarded free land primarily to veterans of the War of 1812. Since most of these veterans were located on the East Coast and were in their 60s, most of them had no desire to relocate to the swamp lands of Illinois. These veterans sold their land rights for about 10 cents on the dollar of the Federal government's price of $2.50 per acre. This Script Act caused a land rush to Central Illinois

between 1852 and 1860. Many farmers moved to Livingston County to take advantage of the cheap land purchased using the veteran's grants. By 1860, all the land in Livingston County was purchased and claimed.

The first railroad to be run in Livingston County was the Chicago & Alton in 1854. This railroad ran in a north-south direction through Pontiac. The next railroad was the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad, which ran its tracks in an east-west direction from Peoria to the Indiana Border in 1857.

New towns sprung up along the new railroads. Existing villages not lucky enough to be on a railroad line quickly became ghost towns. The railroads revolutionized the lives of the farmers in Livingston County. They gave them an easy way to buy machinery and other goods needed for their farming enterprises. Railroads also provided an easy way to ship livestock and grain products from their farms to consumers in large urban areas. Railroads also shipped consumer goods that could be easily sold to farm families.

Because of the Federal Government's 1850 Script Act and the introduction of railroads, the population in Livingston County soared from 1,552 in 1850 to 11,637 in 1860. Life for the typical farm family in Livingston County was dramatically improved because farm families utilized the railroad to bring in needed supplies and to export the livestock and grains they produced on their farms.



The introduction of railroads in Livingston County dramatically changed the lives of the early pioneer settlers. One of the first steam locomotives purchased by the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad in the 1850s was made by the Latham Company in Vermont and this is a modern drawing of this locomotive. The Peoria & Oquawka Railroad later changed its name to the TP&W Railroad and its tracks run parallel to Route 24 through Livingston County.

CHAPTER 27

Most Interesting Life Story in Livingston County [Peter Josef Mies]

Most early settlers in Livingston County were farmers who emigrated from other states or European countries. Some of them served in the Civil War.

One early settler, Peter Josef Mies (1834-1900), had the most interesting life story of any early settler. Peter J. Mies was born in Germany in 1834, and his parents were Gottfried Mies and Anna Shutz. Peter J. Mies was the third of nine children in the family. Peter's father only owned three acres in Germany, and it was not enough land to support a family of 11 people.

Peter's family was relatively poor, and his mother homespun their clothing. Their kitchen table was made of heavy oak, and in the center was a bowl-like depression that held mixed food. Around the table's edge were smaller depressions that were used instead of plates. Underneath the table, a small strip of wood held the spoons, the only eating utensils they owned. Their food was usually some soup, and often, the cupboard was low on supplies.

At the age of 16, Peter started a three-year Carpenter apprenticeship. He worked for two and a half years as an apprentice and six months as a tradesman. Peter lived at home, and his father had to provide the wood for him to practice on. During his schooling, Peter learned how to properly sharpen all the tools used by carpenters. As a graduation project, Peter made a long wood plane.

After graduating as a Carpenter, Peter found that the pay for workers in his trade was very low. Peter's father encouraged him to take a job in the mines, but Peter did not like that idea. In that era, Peter also faced mandatory military service.

Peter decided to emigrate from Germany to America. He sneaked out of Germany to avoid mandatory military service, and in 1854, his ship arrived in New York Harbor. Peter was 20 and had 10 cents in his pocket, so he traveled to Chicago. Peter made friends with a German family living in Mendota, Illinois. He then got a job in Michigan, helping to cut down

pine trees for lumber. Peter was too frail to be a lumberjack, so his job was to sharpen the tools used by the work crew.

Peter then caught the gold mining "bug" and decided to go to California to strike it rich in the gold fields. Peter went to New York but found he did not have enough money to pay for passage on a ship that would leave New York, sail around Cape Horn, and go on to the California gold fields. Peter decided to take the ship as far as his money would pay for, then stop and work to earn the money to travel the rest of the way to California.

When the ship reached Cape Town, Peter ran out of money. He then worked for six months in a South African copper mine. Peter later recounted that the miners were a very rough and low-class bunch of men. Peter's co-workers in the Cape Town copper mine often frequently talked about striking it rich in the Australian Gold Rush. Peter changed his plans and decided to sail for Melbourne, Australia. In Melbourne, Peter found work as a carpenter, helping to build a new church. While he was in Melbourne, Peter saw a sack of corn with Mendota, Illinois, printed on the sack. Peter was homesick for his German friends back in Mendota, so he set sail from Melbourne to San Francisco. This ocean voyage took 177 days to get to San Francisco.

When Peter got to San Francisco, the American Civil War was taking place. Peter enlisted in the California Infantry. He was disappointed that he was assigned to stay in California instead of fighting in the big battles out East.

After serving three years in the U.S. Army, Peter sailed from San Francisco to the Isthmus of Panama and walked across Panama to the Gulf of Mexico. Peter then took a ship to New York and returned to see his German friends in Mendota, in LaSalle County, Illinois.

After arriving in Mendota, Peter worked on the Enenbach family farm during the summer. He also did work as a carpenter. Peter met and liked one of the young Enenbach daughters, Elizabeth Enenbach.

Peter decided to travel to Omaha to get a job helping to build the new Transcontinental Railroad from Omaha to San Francisco. The railroad boss

put Peter in charge of building all the wood water towers needed to provide water to the steam locomotives.

Peter then asked Elizabeth to come to Omaha. Peter and Elizabeth were married in 1867 in Omaha. Joseph was 32, and Elizabeth was 19 when they married. She helped to care for Peter's wood tank builders, who boarded with them. Their first son, Will, was born in Nebraska. Their son was the youngest person present at the big ceremony where the Golden Spike was driven in Utah on May 10, 1869, completing the Transcontinental Railroad.

Peter and Elizabeth Mies saved $4,000, equivalent to $103,450 in today's dollars. They bought 160 acres near present-day Saunemin and tried farming. Unfortunately, 1873 was an abysmal weather year for agriculture, and Peter had no experience farming in Illinois. At this point, the family had four children to support. The family moved back to Mendota, and Peter worked for the railroad for four more years.

The Mies family then moved back to Saunemin and resumed farming. The introduction of railroads in Livingston County made farming easier because needed supplies could be imported, and farm products could easily be exported. Clay field tile was introduced in the 1880s, draining the swampy land in Livingston County. Peter and Elizabeth Mies successfully raised their eight children on their farm.

One of the seven sons of Peter and Elizabeth Mies was Henry J. Mies (1869-1932). Henry J. Mies' hobbies included history, geology, collecting Native American artifacts, and glass plate photography. Henry. J. Mies gave a speech about Native American history to the Pontiac Kiwanis Club, which was so interesting that it led to the creation of the Livingston County Historical Society in 1924. This Society celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2024.

One of the grandsons of Peter and Elizabeth Mies was Ernest G. Mies (1911-1977) of Fairbury. Ernest Mies farmed northwest of Fairbury. He served in the U.S. Army in World War II and received the Purple Heart in France. Ernest Mies was a John Joda American Legion Post member and was director of the American Legion Speedway for many years. Ernest Mies was well-known in the Fairbury area because of his work with the

American Legion Speedway, the Fairbury Fair, and the Fairbury Board of Education.

Peter Josef Mies had one of the most interesting life stories of any settler in Livingston County. He was raised as a member of a relatively poor family in Germany. He learned the carpenter's trade in Germany and emigrated to Michigan to work in a pine tree logging operation. Peter worked as a South African copper miner and worked in Australia as a gold miner and carpenter. Peter served in the Civil War and helped to build the Transcontinental Railroad. He concluded his working career as a successful pioneer farmer in the Saunemin area.

An 1886 photo of the Peter and Elizabeth Mies Family. Peter Josef Mies had the most interesting life story of any of the pioneer settlers of Livingston County.

CHAPTER 28

Hotaling Grocery Store was in Business for 42 Years

Phillip Miller Hotaling ran a Fairbury grocery store from 1900 until 1942. The Hotaling family's story began with Miller Hotaling's birth in New York in 1851. The Hotalings had been in the New York area for many generations. Miller Hotaling's paternal grandfather served as a soldier in the War of 1812, and his great-grandfather fought on the colonists' side in the Revolutionary War.

Jacob Hotaling (1842-1865) was a brother to Miller Hotaling. Jacob Hotaling served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He was captured and sent to the dreaded Andersonville Prison. After 22 months of starvation and disease, Jacob Hotaling died in Andersonville at the age of 21.

Miller Hotaling moved from New York to McLean County in 1868 when he was seventeen years of age. He rented land and started to farm. In 1874, Miller Hotaling married Miss Flora Pulsifier in Livingston County. Miller was 23, and Flora was 19 when they married. Miller and Flora Hotaling had four children. Their first child was Lewis R. Hotaling, who was born in 1877. Their second child was born in 1878 and was named Phillip Miller Hotaling. Daughters Leah May Hotaling was born in 1881, and Chloe Helen Hotaling was born in 1884.

Unfortunately, Flora Miller died in 1886 at the age of 30. Miller Hotaling was 36 years old when his wife died. Flora Miller was buried at Graceland Cemetery near her parents. Mr. Hotaling had to raise four children under the age of nine by himself.

Three years after his wife's death, 39-year-old Miller Hotaling married 18-year-old Martha Ann VanWormer at the Methodist Church in Fairbury. She was born in Brimfield and was the daughter of William and Martha Sheperd VanWormer. Miller and Martha Hotaling had four daughters. Mr. Miller Hotaling had a total of eight children from his two wives.

Phillip Miller Hotaling was born in 1878. He lost his mother when he was eight years old and got an 18-year-old stepmother when he was 11 years old.

In January 1900, twenty-two-year-old Phillip Hotaling bought Jarvel White's interest in the Fairbury grocery firm of Jarvel White and Frank Reaney. This store was then located in the McDowell building, which was later occupied by Zimmerman Hardware in 1942. He bought out Mr. Reaney and became a sole proprietor of the grocery store in 1905.

In 1903, P. M. Hotaling married Jennie Bates Clift. Both the bride and groom were 24 years old when they married. She was the daughter of John H. Clift (1842-1912) and Arabella B. Smith (1849-1928). They initially lived on South Fourth Street when they were first married. Phillip and Jennie Hotaling had one daughter in 1907. They gave their daughter the same first name as the mother of Jennie Clift, Arabella Hotaling (1907-1990).

In 1904, Miller Hotaling, who was 54 years old at the time, sold his 100-acre farm five miles northwest of Fairbury to Rudolph Ulfers for $150 per acre and moved to town.

Nine years after moving to town, Miller Hotaling died in 1913 at the age of 62. He was buried at Graceland Cemetery.

The oldest Fairbury telephone book at the Fairbury Echoes Museum is the 1930 phone book. In this phone book, P. M. Hotaling lived with his wife, Jennie, at 312 E. Elm St., and their phone number was 169. The P. M. Hotaling Quality Grocery was at 116 W. Locust St., and that business had phone numbers of 109 and 516. Mr. Hotaling also had a listing for his coal business with the same address as his grocery store.

In 1935, P. M. Hotaling moved his grocery store from the McDowell Building to the Keck Building. In 1938, Miss Carrie Broadwell was a bookkeeper at Hotaling Grocery. That year, she married Ralph Zimmerman.

That same year, the Blade reported there were at least seven grocery stores in Fairbury. The list of grocery stores included The Harper Grocery, P. M.

Hotaling's, Walton's Department Store, Kroger Food Store, The Model Grocery, Larking Food Store, and Mimmo's Oak St. Market. In 1940, P. M. Hotaling moved his store from the Keck Building to the American Legion Building.

In July 1940, Jennie Hotaling, wife of P. M. Hotaling, died at the age of 61 in Fairbury. She was buried in Graceland Cemetery.

The Fairbury Post Office had at least five different locations over the years in Fairbury. In 1938, it was located in the building at the northeast corner of Second and Locust Streets. In 1940, the City wanted to buy land for a new post office from the TP&W railroad. The new post office would be built at the southwest corner of Locust and Fourth Streets. The TP&W railroad said the lot was worth $8,400. Mr. P. M. Hotaling and a group of Fairbury men went to the Federal Court building in Peoria and argued the lot was only worth $2,500. The Judge agreed with the Fairbury men and determined the lot was worth $2,500. Unfortunately, World War II started in 1941—the War delayed construction of all new post offices. Fairbury's new post office was not built until 1959.

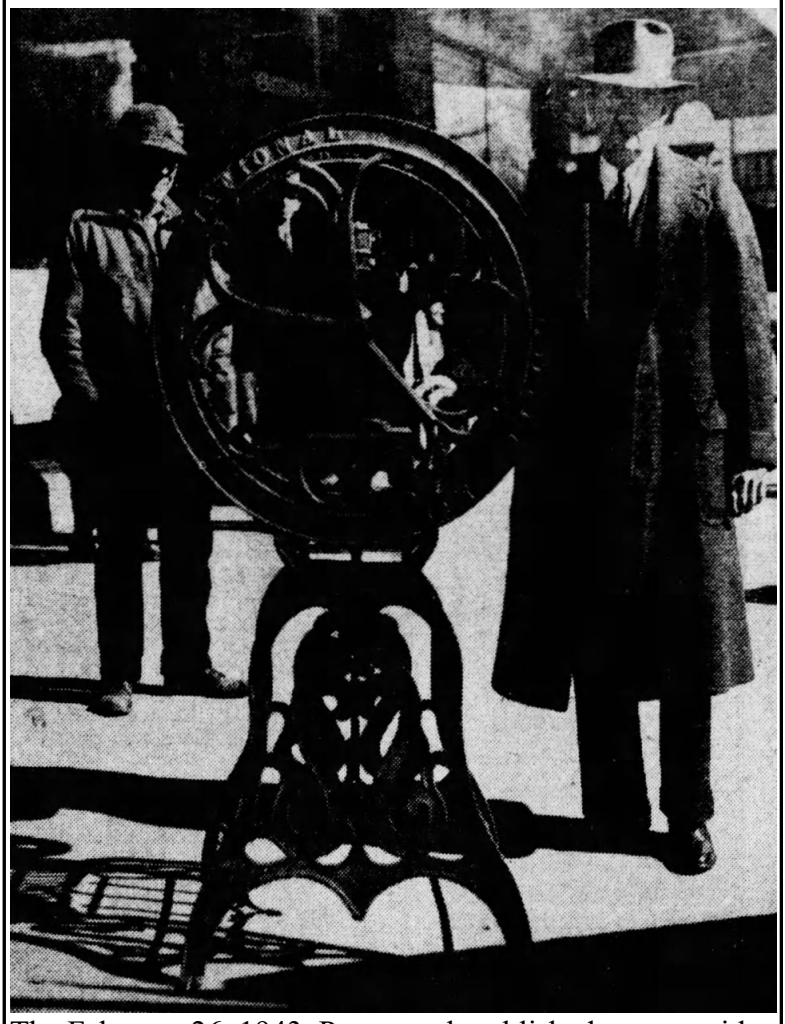
After being in the grocery business for 42 years in Fairbury, P. M. Hotaling closed his store in September 1942. Mr. Hotaling told the Blade he started with $350 and a horse and wagon in 1900.

In 1943, Fairbury had a big steel scrap drive. The scrap metal collected was melted down and used to make new military equipment to support the World War II effort. Since P. M. Hotaling had just closed his grocery store the year before, he donated his large coffee grinder. Fairbury's first fire alarm bell was also contributed to the scrap drive.

In 1957, P. M. Hotaling received special recognition for being a member of the Fairbury Odd Fellows for 50 years. Grand Master Harry E. Burns from Crystal Lake came to Fairbury and gave Mr. Hotaling his Odd Fellow Jewel.

Phillip Miller Hotaling died in 1966 at the age of 88. He was buried in Graceland Cemetery.

P. M Hotaling owned and operated a grocery store in Fairbury for over 42 years. He also owned and operated the Fairbury Coal Chute company. In his later years, he sold real estate and seed corn. Mr. Hotaling was an essential member of the Fairbury business community.



The February 26, 1943, Pantagraph published a story with photos about a huge World War II scrap drive in Fairbury. The caption for this photo was "Antique - One of the oldest items contributed was the old coffee grinder used by P.M. Hotaling in his grocery for 35 years. He hopes it will grind up the Axis."

CHAPTER 29

Moore Family One of Fairbury's First Settlers

Valentine Darnall was the first settler in Livingston County and the Fairbury area in the Fall of 1829. Darnall settled on what is now called Indian Creek, about three miles south of Fairbury. In 1832, William McDowell and his five sons settled on Indian Creek about four miles north of Fairbury. Also, in 1832, Franklin Oliver decided to settle about three miles south of Chatsworth.

Another early settler in the Fairbury area was Joseph Moore. He and his family arrived in the Fall of 1831. Joseph built a log cabin on Indian Creek south of Fairbury, which later became Indian Grove Township.

The story of the Moore family began with the birth of Jonathan J. Moore Jr. in 1787 in North Carolina. Jonathan J. Moore married Sarah Peterson in 1806 in North Carolina. Jonathan was eighteen, and Sarah was seventeen years old when they married. Jonathan and Sarah had seventeen children. The Jonathan Moore family moved to Overton County, Tennessee. This county is about 100 miles east of Nashville and 25 miles south of the Kentucky border.

One of Jonathan and Sarah Moore's sons was Joseph Moore. He was born in 1812 in North Carolina before the family moved to Overton County. In 1829, when Joseph Moore was seventeen, he married twenty-one-year-old Nancy Ann "Anna" Travis in Overton County, Tennessee.

In August of 1831, Richard Martin Moore, the only child of Joseph and Anna Moore, was born in Overton County. In October of 1831, when infant son Richard M. Moore was just two months old, the Joseph Moore family decided to emigrate from Overton to Indian Grove Township. Joseph Moore walked the 450 miles from Overton to the Fairbury area. His wife, Anna Moore, carried their two-month-old infant son to Illinois while she rode their horse.

Back then, suitable land was defined as having water and trees. Every early settler in the Fairbury area settled on Indian Creek or the Vermilion

River. Joseph Moore staked a land claim along Indian Creek and erected a log cabin. Joseph lived in this log cabin until he died in 1851 at the age of 39. Joseph Moore was buried in Cooper Cemetery. This cemetery is about eight miles southwest of Fairbury. Anna Moore died in 1880 at the age of 72. She was buried with her husband in Cooper Cemetery.

Another son of Jonathan and Sarah Moore was Richard Glen Moore. He was born in 1810 in North Carolina before the family moved to Overton County. In 1828, Richard G. Moore married Perlina Phillips. Richard and Perlina were 18 years of age when they married in Overton County. Richard and Perlina Moore had ten children.

The Richard G. Moore family moved from Overton County to Panther Creek in McLean County in 1830. Two years later, in April 1832, the family moved to a 160-acre farm in Section 29 of Indian Grove Township south of Fairbury. Also, in April of 1832, the Black Hawk War began. During this five-month-long war, Richard G. Moore served as a teamster. Richard hauled provisions from Ottawa and Peru to the U.S. forces fighting against Sauk Chief Blackhawk. This war ended in October 1832, and all Native Americans were forced to leave Illinois.

In 1833, after the Black Hawk War had ended, Richard G. Moore visited Chicago. Richard found that Chicago only had six log structures that served as stores. Richard G. Moore died in 1893 at the age of 83, and Perlina Moore died in 1899 at the age of 89. Both Richard and Perlina Moore were buried in Cooper Cemetery.

Isam Moore, another son of Jonathan and Sarah Moore, moved from Overton County to a farm in Section 21 in Indian Grove Township in 1834. Isam Moore was born in 1818 in North Carolina. In 1840, Isam Moore married Mary Ann "Polly" Spence. She was born in Kentucky and was the daughter of James Spence II (1797-1881) and Susannah Ristone Call (1803-1881). Isam was 21, and Polly was 15 years of age when they married in Livingston County. Isam and Polly Moore had four children. In Indian Grove Township, Isam Moore held the offices of Justice of the Peace, Constable, School Trustee, Assessor, and Collector.

Isam Moore died in 1893 at the age of 80. Polly Moore passed away in 1901 at the age of 77. Both Isam and Polly Moore were buried in Cooper Cemetery.

In August of 1937, descendants of the Moore and Travis families held a reunion at Marsh Park in Fairbury. One hundred fifty descendants of these two families attended the reunion. The group recounted that Joseph Moore and his wife, Anna Travis, were the first settlers in what is now Indian Grove Township in the Fall of 1831. Reunion attendees noted that all the early settlers chose their homes to be in the large grove of trees by Indian Creek south of Fairbury because everyone knew the prairies would never be good for anything except pasture land.

The two oldest attendees at the 1937 family reunion were the grandchildren of Joseph and Anna Moore. Hannah Moore, the daughter of Richard and Perlina Moore, was 90 years old when she attended the reunion. Hannah Moore married Robert Spence. Joseph and Anna Moore's second grandchild who participated in the reunion was 85-year-old Jonathan Glen Moore, the son of Richard and Perlina Moore. Hannah and Jonathan B. Moore died just a few years after the 1937 family reunion.

The first settlers in the Fairbury area were primarily three families. Valentine Darnall was the first settler, and he settled in 1829 in what is now Belle Prairie Township. In 1831, the Joseph Moore family settled in Indian Grove Township. The third family to settle in the Fairbury area was the William McDowell family, which settled in Avoca Township north of Fairbury in 1832. Many descendants of these three families still live in the Fairbury area.

Richard G. Moore (1810-1893) and his wife Perlina Phillips (1810-1899) were pioneer settlers of Indian Grove Township.

CHAPTER 30

Confederate Soldier Finished Life's Journey in Fairbury [Madison Mines Kershner]

Although about 65 Union Army Civil War veterans are buried at Graceland Cemetery, only two fought in the Confederate Army. One of these Confederate veterans was Madison Mines Kershner.

Madison M. Kershner's story started when he was born in 1844 in Virginia. His parents were William Kershner and Elizabeth Nicholas. Madison grew up in the Greenbrier area of Virginia.

When the Civil War started in 1861, the state of Virginia seceded from the Union. The citizens in eastern Virginia owned slaves and sided with the Confederacy. The citizens of western Virginia owned few enslaved people and mostly sided with the Union. In 1863, West Virginia became a separate state. Today, Madison's birthplace would be considered Greenbrier, West Virginia.

Madison M. Kershner enlisted in the Confederate military after the Civil War started in 1861. Madison was 17 years old when he joined the Virginia 13th Battalion Company A Light Artillery. Madison's unit became known as Otey's Battery.

In early March 1862, Captain George Gaston Otey, adjutant of the 1st Virginia Infantry, was assigned to organize a new light artillery battery. The recruits for this unit were from Richmond's upper and middle classes and transfers from other groups. Some native-born Yankees from Pennsylvania and Maryland also joined the mix. Captain Otey and his Company A battery were held in such high esteem that men who had served in other units as officers and NCOs joined the Otey's Battery as privates.

Madison's older brother, James Harvey Kershner, joined the Virginia "Monroe" Light Artillery when he was 24. Madison's other brother, Jacob Nicholas Kershner, joined the Virginia 27th Infantry Company D at the age of 21.

From 1862 until the Spring of 1864, Madison's Battery was engaged in numerous Western Virginia and East Tennessee operations. Otey's Battery fought their last action at Appomattox Station, Virginia, in 1865 against George Armstrong Custer's Yankee Cavalry. Madison's unit held off the Union forces for several days from attacking General Lee's main army.

General Lee surrendered to General Grant on April 9th, 1865. Madison Kershner's unit was included as part of Lee's surrender. During Madison's three years of service, 203 individuals passed through the ranks of his Battery. Nine men were killed or mortally wounded. Twenty-four others were injured but recovered. A total of about 44 men were lost in action. As a tribute to the unit's integrity and an indication of the Battery's quality, only five members were lost to desertion in its three years of service. Few groups, Confederate or Union, could boast of such a record.

Madison and his two brothers fought for the Confederacy, and all three survived the Civil War. After the Civil War ended, Madison M. Kershner married Victoria Mahood Diddle in 1866. Madison was 22 years old, and Victoria was 20. They had nine children on their farm in West Virginia.

In 1902, the Kershner family moved from West Virginia to Normal, Illinois. In 1910, Madison Kershner was 70 years old. His wife, Victoria, and three adult children were living with him in Normal, Illinois. Daughters Grace and Lide were both school teachers. Son Gaston Conrad Kershner was finishing training in the manual training department at Normal University.

The exact reason why the Kershner family moved from West Virginia to Normal, Illinois, is unknown. What is now Illinois State University was then known as Illinois State Normal University. It was founded in 1857 as an institution to train future teachers. Since three of the Kershner children attended the university to become teachers, the whole family may have decided to move to Normal, Illinois.

In 1914, the youngest son, Gaston Conrad Kershner, married Elva Shanklin in Bloomington. After their wedding, they moved to Muskogee, Okla., where he took a job teaching manual training. Today, we call manual training Industrial Arts.

A portion of the Kershner family moved to Fairbury in 1916. In addition to Madison and Victoria Kershner, children Lide Kershner and Frank Kershner also moved to Fairbury. Lide was beginning a long career as a Fairbury school teacher. Grace Kershner taught her whole career in Decatur schools.

In 1918, Madison M. Kershner died in Fairbury at the age of 74. He lived at 606 East Elm Street, and his obituary recounted that he had moved to Fairbury two years earlier. Madison M. Kershner was buried at Graceland Cemetery.

Son Frank Kershner died unexpectedly at age 50 in Fairbury. He died of a stroke and was also buried at Graceland.

In 1928, Grace Kershner retired from teaching at Decatur and moved to Fairbury to live with her sister, Lide. The two sisters never married.

In 1929, a book titled Roll of Honor: Record of Burial Places of Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Army Nurses Buried in the State of Illinois was published. In that book, Madison M. Kershner was identified as a Confederate soldier buried at Graceland Cemetery in Fairbury. Unfortunately, the book's author misspelled his name as Madison Kirschner instead of the correct spelling of Madison Mines Kershner.

Victoria Kershner died in 1935 in Fairbury at the age of 88. She was buried beside her husband in Graceland. Sisters Grace and Lide Kershner both lived to be 76. Grace died in 1948, and Lide passed away in 1953.

Madison M. Kershner's life spanned his birth in Virginia, fighting for the Confederacy in the Civil War, moving to Normal, Illinois, and spending the last two years of his life in Fairbury. His daughter Lide Kershner spent her career as a teacher in Fairbury, teaching two generations of Fairbury students.

Madison Kershner's Confederate unit protected General Lee's main Army for a couple of days until General Lee surrendered to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865.

CHAPTER 31

Fascinating Recent Additions to the Fairbury Echoes Museum Collection

Over the last several years, many people have donated interesting items to the collection of Fairbury-related items at the Echoes Museum. Many Baby Boomers are now downsizing their homes and de-cluttering. These Baby Boomers often donate Fairbury-related items to the museum. Other citizens who are charged with managing the estate of a family member are also museum contributors.

A few years ago, the existence of the Sanborn Insurance maps of early Fairbury was discovered. The five different years of maps cover the period from 1885 up to 1911. They are a treasure trove of information for people seeking information about where businesses or houses were located. The museum sells paper copies of the 1885 maps to museum patrons.

Early Fairbury was a wild town of coal miners from 1862 to 1910. Two Fairbury City Marshals were killed in the line of duty. The museum has a photograph of one of these City Marshals, Amos Brown. Unfortunately, the only photograph of the other City Marshal killed in the line of duty was a poor-quality old Blade photograph. One of the Echoes Museum board members arranged for an artist to make a new drawing of Fred Baird. This new drawing is now on permanent display in the museum.

William Stackpole was a very interesting early citizen of Fairbury. During his lifetime, he was a gold prospector, pioneer, farmer, merchant, grain speculator, oil field worker, real estate salesperson, inventor, writer, publisher, and visionary. In 1871, Stackpole wrote a novel titled The Heart of the West. After a worldwide search, one copy of the 150-year-old book was found and donated to the museum. This book is in the museum's reading room.

Stackpole kept a diary during his trip overland to the California gold fields in 1849. A worldwide search found his old diary, which is still in existence today. It is at the Yale Research Library on the East Coast. The Yale library scanned all the pages of his diary and sent the information back to

Fairbury. With the assistance of several Fairbury volunteers, the entire diary was transcribed from Stackpole's longhand writing to modern typed text. The easy-to-read modern typed version is available to museum patrons in the reading room. The diary is a fascinating collection of adventures encountered by Stackpole as he traveled by oxen-drawn wagon to California in 1849.

Levi Judson Odell grew up in Fairbury. He invented a check-row corn planter and manufactured it in Fairbury. Levi married a woman from Wisconsin. He then moved to Wisconsin and invented an early form of a typewriter. Levi licensed several Chicago companies to build several million of these typewriters. During the last portion of his life, he moved to Los Angeles and manufactured women's razors.

Odell's 130-year-old typewriters are now fairly rare. About once a year, one comes up for sale on eBay. They typically sell for between $500 and $2,000. An Echoes Museum board member purchased an excellent-quality Odell typewriter on eBay and donated it to the museum. The unique typewriter is on permanent display in the museum.

One of Odell's 100-year-old woman's razors was also donated to the museum. It is on permanent display with one of his typewriters.

Over the years, many people have donated items related to Honeggers. Recently, a brand new Honegger jacket was donated to the museum. Two different employee newsletters were also donated. A large red and white sign for Honegger's feed was also donated.

A friend of a Fairbury person lives in California. This friend noticed there were two very old autograph books for sale on a website. These two autograph books belonged to a Fairbury girl, Hattie Earnheart, and dated back to 1883 and 1884. In that era, young girls would have their friends sign their autograph books. These books contain names, poems, and sketches from Fairbury citizens who lived here 140 years ago. A museum board member purchased and donated the two old autograph books to the museum collection.

When Fairbury was founded in 1857, almost all the farmland was swampland. In the 1880s, clay field tiles started to be installed to drain the

swamp. Tiling converted the worthless swampland into the most productive farmland on the planet.

There was such a large demand for clay field tile that two Fairbury farmers, Rufus Strait and James McDowell, set up massive tile manufacturing facilities on their farms. Initially, the clay tile had a D shape, with the flat part of the D being placed on the bottom of the field. It was soon discovered that round clay tile drained the land better than the D-shaped tile. The manufacture of D-shaped tile was discontinued in favor of round tile.

Recently, it was discovered that tile was also manufactured on the Fugate farm northeast of Fairbury. A descendant donated samples of the clay tile that was manufactured on this farm to the museum, including a very rare sample of the D-shaped tile.

Another recent donation to the museum was rare photographs of the 1919 Fairbury Fair. These old photographs show that the Fairbury Fair had elephants, artists on flying trapeze, lions jumping from platforms in a large cage, and auto racing.

You can see these recent additions by visiting the Fairbury Echoes Museum at 126 West Locust. The museum is open on Thursdays and Fridays from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. and Saturdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. During the winter months of January and February, it is only open on Saturdays.

If you want to donate a Fairbury-related item to the museum, you can visit the museum, call the museum at 815-692-2191, or contact Dale Maley.

Fairbury native Levi Odell invented and sold several million of these early typewriters. The typewriter shown in this photo was purchased and donated to the Fairbury Echoes Museum, where it is on permanent display. Unfortunately, Mr. Odell's design was eventually replaced by a design with many different keys, similar to today's computer keyboards.

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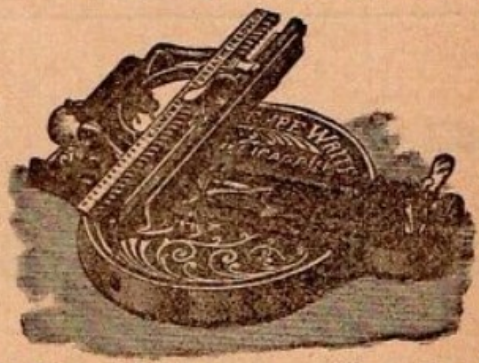

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CHAPTER 32

Long History of Somerville Family in Livingston County

For over 160 years, the Somerville family and descendants have played an essential role in Livingston County and Fairbury's history.

The story of the Somerville family began with the birth of Robert Somerville in Warrington County, North Carolina, in 1827. North Carolina was born into slavery in North Carolina. In 1845, Robert Somerville married Esther Collins. She was also born into slavery in Grandview County, North Carolina. The parents of Robert Somerville and Esther Collins could not be determined using standard genealogical research methods because they were enslaved. When they married, both Robert and Esther were 18 years of age. They had eleven children.

The Civil War started on April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbor. On September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation letter, which said that if the rebels did not end the fighting and rejoin the Union by January 1, 1863, all slaves in the rebellious states would be free.

The Confederacy did not end the fighting, so on January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation that declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free."

President Lincoln's first letter in September 1862 was likely the impetus for the Robert Somerville family to leave North Carolina and come to what is now Cayuga north of Pontiac. In 1862, when the Somerville family moved from North Carolina to Livingston County, Robert Somerville and his wife Esther were both 35 years old.

The Village of Fairbury was created in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. The Robert

Somerville family came to Livingston County just five years after Fairbury was created.

Per the 1870 and 1880 U.S. Census, Robert and Esther Somerville farmed in the Cayuga area. No Census records exist for 1890 because they were destroyed in a fire. By the time of the 1900 Census, Robert and his wife Esther were 72 years of age. They lived in a house on Oak Street (U.S. Route 24) in Fairbury with their 30-year-old son, John Somerville.

Before he died at the age of 75 in 1903, Robert Somerville had saved enough money to purchase 160 acres of farmland. His wife, Esther Somerville, died in 1907 at the age of 80. Robert and Esther Somerville were buried in the southwest portion of Graceland Cemetery in Fairbury.

Some of Robert and Esther Somerville's 11 children moved to Chicago. A daughter, Martha "Mattie" Somerville, married Alonzo Barton (1868-1937), a barber in Pontiac. Mr. Barton was an instructor in the Pontiac Prison barber shop for 32 years.

William Somerville (1847-1893) was one of the sons of Robert and Esther Somerville. William married Julia Perkins. William Somerville died in Chicago, but one of his children, Frank M. Somerville, lived in Fairbury and married Elizabeth Shavers (1877-1958). Frank was 27, and Elizabeth was 19 when they married in 1896. They had seven children.

The oldest child of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville was Alma Somerville (1897-1952). She married Bloomington barber Charles W. Brown in 1917. Charles was 31, and Alma was 20 when they married. They had one child, Charles William Brown (1920-1990). Alma died in a tragic automobile-truck accident in 1952 north of Weston. Melvin Rutherford of Chenoa drove the truck, and he survived the accident. Alma was only 55 years old when she was killed in the accident.

Charles W. Brown, son of Charles and Alma Brown, married Betty Jean Sears in 1948. Charles was 28, and Betty Jean was 20 when they married. They had five children. These five children included Alma Brown, Lori Brown, Lisa Brown-Polnitz, Charlene Brown-Aaron, and Charles William Robert Brown (1960-2020).

Frank Leslie "Les" Somerville (1900-1984) was the oldest son of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville. Les Somerville was a scrap iron dealer in the Fairbury area. He married Marie Henley, and they had four girls. The girls attended Fairbury Township High School and were named Marion, Elizabeth, Fern, and Frankie June Somerville.

Another daughter of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville was Grace L. Somerville (1898-1973). Grace had two sons who attended Fairbury Township High School: John F. Somerville (1917-1989) and Robert L. Somerville (1921-1999). The father of these two boys was not mentioned in any of the family genealogical records. When son John F. Somerville filled out his application to collect Social Security, he noted that his mother was Grace Somerville and his father was Omer Grisson.

A third daughter of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville was Elizabeth Somerville (1903-1976). She married Joseph Bowie in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1922. Joseph and Elizabeth Bowie had three children: Betty, Lawrence K., and Joseph Bowie.

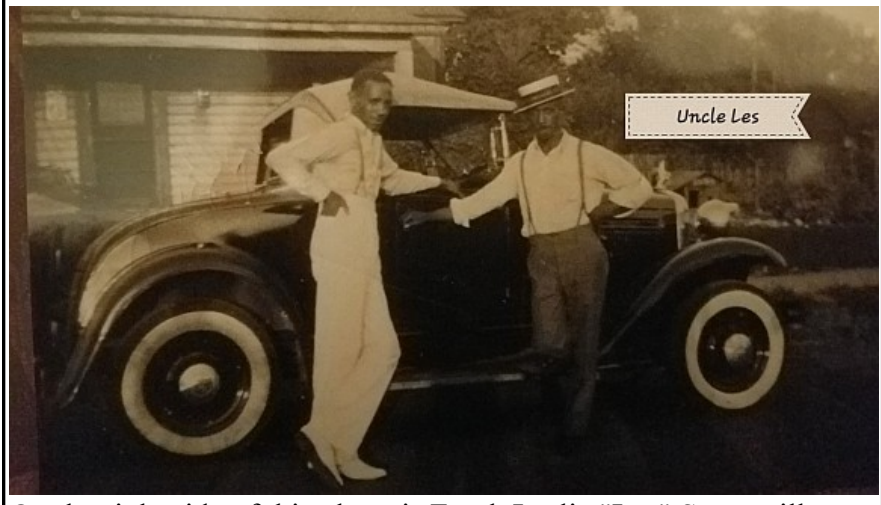
William Horace "Bill" Somerville (1905-1977) was another son of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville. Bill Somerville never married, died in Peoria, and was buried in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

Aldine Somerville (1908-1987), daughter of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville, married Martin Baker. They had no children.

Robert C. Somerville (1910-1963) was the youngest child of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville. He attended Fairbury schools. Robert was a World War II veteran and served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific Theater. He married Carrie Mitchner in 1945 in Peoria. Robert worked for the City of Peoria. They had no children.

Two Somerville families were listed in the 1930 Fairbury telephone book. The Frank and Elizabeth Somerville family lived at 111 N. Eighth Street, with a telephone number of 440. Frank's occupation was listed as a teamster. The Leslie Somerville family lived at 613 W. Walnut Street, and Leslie's occupation was truckster.

In retrospect, the life story of Robert Somerville and Esther Collins is fascinating. They were both born into slavery in North Carolina. They moved to Livingston County in 1862 and became tenant farmers. They raised a large family, saved their money, and were able to purchase 160 acres of farmland eventually. The Somerville family has played an essential role in the history of Livingston County for over 160 years.



On the right side of this photo is Frank Leslie "Les" Somerville (1900-1984). He was the oldest son of Frank and Elizabeth Somerville. Les Somerville was a scrap dealer in the Fairbury area.

CHAPTER 33

How the Fairbury-Cropsey High School got the nickname of Tartars

When the Prairie-Central School District was formed in 1985, a contest was held to select a new school name and a mascot. The previous mascots and colors were FCHS Fighting Tartars (green and yellow gold), FSW Fighting Eskimos (red and black), and Chatsworth Bluebirds (blue and orange). Prairie Central was selected as the name of the new consolidated school. The chosen new mascot was the Hawks, and the new colors were white, Columbia blue, and navy.

In 1979, Kim Nussbaum was a 7th grader in Fairbury. Kim undertook a project as an assignment in Randy Lane's social science class. Her project was to find out when the Fairbury-Cropsey high school teams acquired the nickname Tartars and who named them.

Kim asked Jim Roberts (1921-2006), the Editor of the Fairbury Blade newspaper, for help on her project. The first phone call that Jim Roberts made was to Don Karnes (1902-1982). Don was a star athlete at Fairbury. He then played football with Red Grange at the University of Illinois and lettered on the basketball team. In reply to Jim Roberts' question, Don replied, "Gee, I don't know; they were the Green & Gold when I played!" Don suggested that Jim call Chuck Purdum (1912-1979). Chuck was not available when Jim Roberts tried to telephone him.

Jim Roberts then called Thomas "Neile" Hanley. Mr. Hanley was senior among our town's half-dozen attorneys in that era and certainly one of the most loyal and ardent fans of the Fairbury-Cropsey teams. "Gosh," Neale said, "it's got to be at least 25 years or more, but I don't know where the name came from." Twenty-five years before this 1979 phone call would have been 1954 for the origin of Tartars as the nickname.

In 1979, Clara Cange (1918-1986) worked as an Assistant Librarian at the Dominy Memorial Library. She started working backward through the Fairbury-Cropsey Criers, the class yearbooks published in that era. Clara

reported back to Jim Roberts that she found random but not very dedicated references to the Tartars back in the late 1930s.

The next Saturday, Kim Nussbaum and Jim Roberts visited the Dominy Memorial Library. They found one story—and one story only—in the 1938 Crier that referenced "The Tartars." They also noted that the name of John Ziegenhorn (1923-2013) was mentioned often in the same Crier.

When Jim Roberts telephoned John Ziegenhorn, he got an instant answer to the question about the origin of the name Tartars. John recounted that it started with "Buck" Smith (1910-1976) when he started his second year as the football coach. We'd been the "Warriors" for a short time, and he didn't like that, so he came up with the name Tartar. "At that time, I didn't even know what a Tartar was," John continued.

Jim Roberts recounted that apparently, neither did anyone else, for the illustration which has been used since that time is not of a Tartar but of a Trojan, a helmeted 'Warrior' from Troy. The Trojans, you will remember if you recall your assignments in Homer's epic poem, the Illiad, were the ill-fated Warriors on the western shore of what is now Turkey, near the Hellespont and the Dardanelles straits, who were victimized and wiped out by the Greeks in the famous "Trojan Horse" escapade about 800 BC.

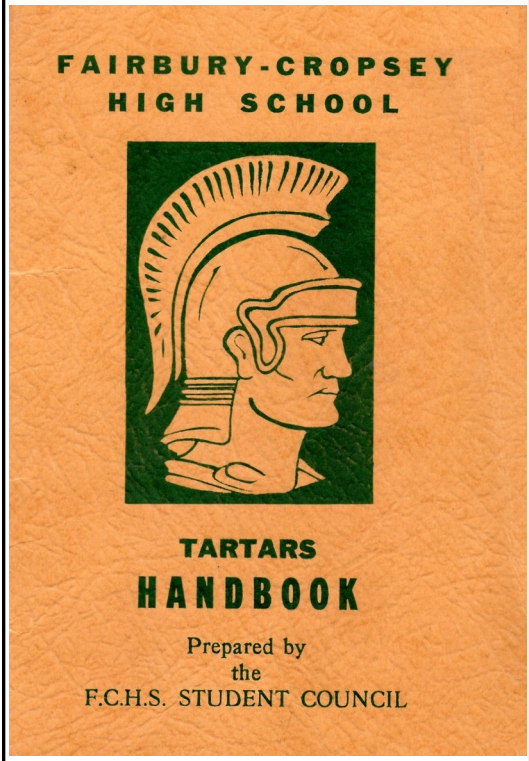
Some 2,000 years later, the Tartars, who founded the Mongolian Empire in the north of what is now China in about 800 AD, began a westerly movement about 1,200 AD and ultimately ended up all through Central Europe, including Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Turkey, Russia, and Bulgaria.

Today, the term Tartar applies to the Turks, but there is about a 2,000-year difference between the time the Trojans and the Tartars occupied that Turkish turf.

Jim Roberts recounted that "Buck" Smith, who coached at Fairbury, had died in 1976 and was a close friend of Chuck Purdum. If Mr. Roberts had been able to contact Chuck Purdum, he probably knew the story of where the nickname Tartars came from.

Jim Roberts could not determine who picked out a Trojan head and called him a Tartar. This Trojan head was used for many Fairbury-Cropsey-related items, including sports items, band items, three-ring school folder covers, and school handbooks. Many of these items have been donated, and some are on display at the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

The Tartar nickname was used for about 47 years, from 1938 until the Prairie-Central school consolidation in 1985, when the Hawks became the school mascot or nickname.



The Fairbury-Cropsey High School handbook for the 1962-1963 school year. The Tartar emblem was used on many different school related items.

CHAPTER 34

Fairbury Used to be Under Lake Pontiac

The land around Fairbury is relatively flat. The glaciers from the last ice age leveled it, and it became some of the most productive farmland in the world.

Five primary ice ages have occurred in the last 2.5 billion years of Earth's history. In chronological order, these ice ages include the Huronian, Cryogenian, Andean-Saharan, Paleozoic, and the Quaternary Ice Age, which ended about 12,000 years ago.

Scientists are still working to determine what exactly caused the past ice ages. Most theories revolve around subtle changes in the Earth's orbit around the sun. These changes can cause major temperature changes on the planet, and they are likely cyclical in nature.

If global temperatures enter a cooling period, snow accumulates yearly and does not melt in northern areas. When enough snow accumulates, it turns into ice, and the ice sheet flows in a southerly direction. The last major glacier to cover most of Illinois occurred during the Wisconsin glacial period. The Wisconsin glacial period started about 75,000 years ago and ended about 12,000 years ago. This ice sheet reached a thickness of about two miles high in Canada and one mile high in Wisconsin. The thickness of the ice sloped gently down to the furthest southern point of the glacier.

The ice sheet from the Wisconsin period covered the eastern half of Illinois and extended south down to about 180 miles south of Chicago. Fairbury is 100 miles south of Chicago.

The glacier acted like a giant bulldozer and flattened any hills on the land. The rocks and soil sheared off became part of the glacial ice, and the rocks in the ice made the glacier like a sheet of sandpaper, smoothing the land.

When global temperatures rose, the glaciers began to melt and retreat back from Central Illinois to Canada. Sometimes, the temperature would cycle from warmer to colder, and the glacier would advance again. When the

southern edge of the ice sheet melted, the glacier left a pile of rocks and debris called a moraine. The glacier retreated gradually, and each major step left a different moraine.

The prominent moraines in Livingston County left from the Wisconsin period include the Cropsey Moraine, the Chatsworth Moraine, and the Marseilles Moraine. The Cropsey Moraine is further subdivided into the Inner, Middle, and Outer Cropsey moraines.

Moraines can be thought of as small earthen dams. As the glaciers melted, a tremendous amount of water was released. When this meltwater became trapped between different moraines, temporary lakes were formed. Sometimes, the water would erode the Moraine and open a channel to allow the lake to drain away.

Lake Pontiac was the largest lake in Livingston County left after the Wisconsin-era glacier melted. This lake covered what is now Fairbury and Pontiac. The second largest lake was Lake Watseka in the southeastern part of Livingston County.

It is unknown how long Lake Pontiac existed before it drained. It may have existed in the Fairbury and Pontiac area for hundreds of years.

On May 23, 1936, the Illinois State Geological Survey conducted a geologic field trip for high school science teachers. Participants drove in their cars from the Pontiac High School north to Odell, south down to Forrest, west to Fairbury, northwest to McDowell, and back to Pontiac. They stopped at various locations, and the state geologists pointed out the Marseille moraine and various glacial lakes. A similar geology field trip was done in 1963 in Pontiac, and the program is 33 pages long. Copies of these programs still exist and are in the Livingston County Historical Society archives.

In 1955, Fairbury Township High School sponsored a geological science field trip in the Fairbury area. The general public who attended this field trip drove in their automobiles to various stops, similar to the 1936 Pontiac field trip.

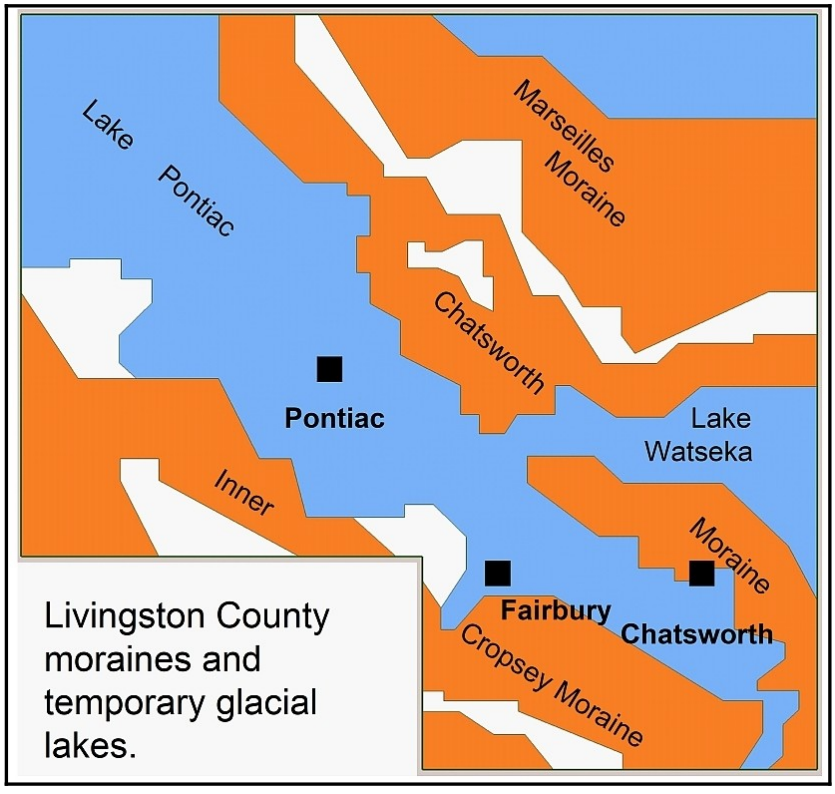
The geologists who conducted this tour noted that the Inner Cropsey Moraine is one in a series of three moraines. The other two are the Outer and Middle Cropsey, which, like the sub-crests of either one, are not equally distinguishable or equal in magnitude at all places. South of Fairbury, the Outer, and Middle Moraines are both narrower than the Inner and the Middle Moraine, on which the town of Cropsey is located, is higher and more prominent than the Outer or Inner Moraines.

The geologists also noted that as a glacier receded, meltwater doubtless accumulated in local ponds or lakelets between the ice front and the last formed Moraine, except where there were channels through the Moraine through which the water could drain. Where such drainage channels are absent, it may be presumed that as the ice front continued to recede, the local ponds and lakelets gradually merged into one large lake that persisted until the glaciers uncovered some passage or until some outlet river eroded a channel through which the lake could be drained.

Geological studies show that such a lake, or a series of lakes, existed behind each of the three Cropsey moraines. Whether the older ones still existed or were drained before the later ones developed has not been determined. However, we know that for a time, the lake's waters that locally existed behind the Inner Cropsey Moraine flowed southward through a gap in the Moraine, which is now part of the valley of Indian Creek.

The 1955 Fairbury area tour program had 17 pages, including the tour routes and various maps of the moraines and glacial lakes. A copy of this program is in the Fairbury Echoes Museum archives. One of the maps was modified to show the moraines and glacial lakes in Livingston County, and this modified map accompanies this article.

Glaciers and ice sheets have been part of Earth's history for billions of years. The next ice age, which will form large ice sheets in Illinois, is expected in about 50,000 years. This next ice age may flatten out our relatively flat farmland even more!


Lake
Pontiac
Marseilles
Moraine
Chatsworth
Pontiac
Lake
Watseka
Inner
Moraine
Fairbury
Chatsworth
Cropsey Moraine
Livingston County moraines and temporary glacial lakes.

A depiction of the area covered by the last glacier which extended down from Canada and covered most of Illinois.

CHAPTER 35

Chautauqua's Provided Adult Education and Entertainment

In Fairbury in the 1870s, there were not many opportunities for adult education or entertainment. The Dominy Memorial Library was not opened until 1905. Radio broadcasts and motion pictures were not readily available until the 1920s. Television was not widely available until the 1950s. Other than newspapers, Fairbury Hall was the only source of adult education and entertainment. It opened in 1871, and citizens could watch plays and hear guest speakers. Fairbury Hall was located at 226 East Locust, where Steidinger Meats & Food is now located.

Sunday schools of the nineteenth century taught more than religion. For many American children, these “Sabbath schools” provided their only general education in reading, writing, arithmetic, and social manners. A Methodist Minister and Bishop, Dr. John H. Vincent (1832-1920), visited many churches in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. As he traveled from church to church, he paid particular attention to the quality of Sunday School teaching. Rev. Vincent found the quality of religious instruction varied too much in these places.

Minister Vincent had an idea to improve the quality of the education children received in Sunday Schools. He planned to develop improved teaching materials and then train teachers on using those new materials. Although Minister Vincent had a great idea, he needed funding to start this endeavor. In 1872, Minister Vincent sought financial support from Lewis Miller. Lewis Miller was a successful industrialist and inventor of the Buckeye reaper (a grain-harvesting farm machine). Their partnership was the beginning of the Chautauqua community.

The two men found a site on the shores of Lake Chautauqua in the state of New York. They invited Sunday School teachers nationwide to come to New York and camp under the stars at night. During the day, the teachers would attend lectures and seminars.

The first Chautauqua meeting, held in 1874 in New York, was a great success. The attendees at that two-week outdoor event were taught religious precepts and improved teaching methods. Because many of these teachers taught immigrant children, foreign languages and sociology classes were offered.

After just a few years, "Daughter" Chautauquas began to spring up. These meetings quickly spread across the country, and by 1915, there were 10,000 smaller Chautauqua-styled events. Each year, additional adult education materials and speeches by famous people were added. Very quickly, the main focus of the annual two-week events shifted from Sunday School teacher education to adult education and entertainment.

In 1878, the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle was created as a correspondence reading course designed to give those who could not attend college the opportunity to have an equivalent education. Soon, reading clubs sprung up all over the country. In 1895, the Fairbury Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle (C.L.S.C.) group was formed. The charter members were Mrs. L. B. Dominy, Mrs. Edna Anderson, Mrs. Zeke Powell, Mrs. Dan Brewer, Mrs. Wesley Walton, Gertrude Gregg, Mrs. Thayer, Miss Rachael Armstrong, Miss Grace Sharpe, Mrs. A. J. Swap, Miss Grace Patterson, Mrs. J. J. Pence, Mrs. E. D. Powell, Mrs. Presler, Mrs. J. A. Reckard, Mrs. B. F. Shankland, and Gertrude Henderson.

The Fairbury club adopted the Chautauqua reading program. This program specified that four books each year from the fields of history, art, literature, and science had to be read and studied. Members also had to study a monthly magazine on essential topics. After reading the magazine, the members had to answer questions on the content of the articles. If a member answered these questions on the books and magazines to the satisfaction of C.L.S.C. Headquarters, she received a diploma. It took four years of work to achieve this diploma. Those who passed the test were allowed to pass through the Golden Gate at Chautauqua, N.Y., at commencement time. Some of the Fairbury members who passed and traveled to New York to go through the Golden Gate were Mrs. Lillie McDowell and Mrs. Herbert Powell.

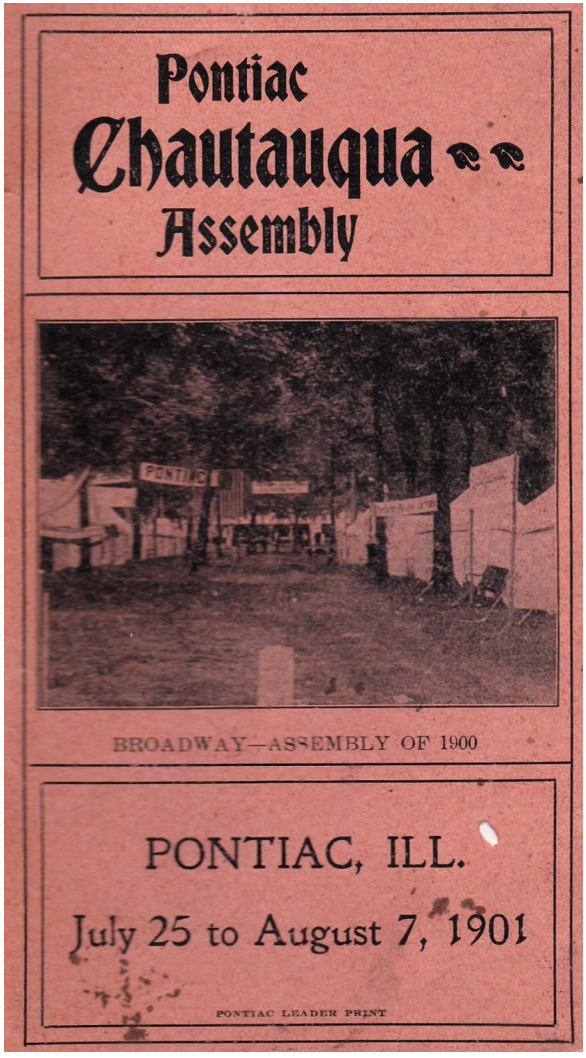
The first Pontiac Chautauqua Assembly was the work of a group of dedicated volunteers led by A.C. Folsom, a bookkeeper at the Allen Candy Company. A parcel of land situated along the Vermilion River known as "Buck's Pasture" was purchased, surveyed, and renamed "Riverside Park." The existing vegetation was cleared, roads were built, and construction began on a large pavilion. Consultations with the New York Chautauqua producers helped to book the speakers and talent for the two-week season, and all preparations for the first Pontiac Chautauqua were complete.

On July 29, 1898, Pontiac's first Chautauqua Assembly opened. Throughout its 32-year history, the Pontiac Chautauqua Assembly hosted famous religious and political speakers and lectures or demonstrations focused on cutting-edge topics in science, technology, philosophy, literature, and world events. Visitors have also been able to hear noted musicians, watch professional dancers, and enjoy comedians, magicians, jugglers, storytellers, and impersonators. Many Fairbury citizens attended the annual two-week Chautauqua events in Pontiac. In 1905, over 107,000 people attended the 16-day event.

Public interest in the Pontiac Chautauqua Assemblies began to wane in the late 1920s. Radio and motion pictures became available to the general public. The Great Depression started in 1929, and attendance was also depressed. The last Pontiac Chautauqua was in 1929.

Although the Pontiac Chautauqua annual meetings died out, the Fairbury Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle group continued going strong. After 130 years, this Fairbury group is still going strong and has regular meetings.

The national Chautauqua movement started out educating Sunday School teachers but quickly morphed into an adult education and entertainment movement. For over 50 years, the annual two-week meetings fulfilled a vast need for adult education and entertainment. However, with the advent of radio and motion pictures, it became obsolete.



Cover of the program pamphlet for the 1901 Chautauqua at Pontiac. The pamphlet contained the schedule of all the different events that took place during the two week Chautauqua.

CHAUTAUQUA LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC CIRCLE HISTORY

(Compiled by Carol Hoffman, 2004-2005 CLSC Vice President)

1. ?
2. Mrs. L. B. Dominey
3. ?
4. ?
5. Mrs. Edna Anderson
6. Mrs. Zeke Powell
7. Mrs. Dan Brewer
8. Mrs. Wesley Walton
9. Gertrude Gregg
10. ?
11. Mrs. Thayer
12. Miss Rachel Armstrong
13. Miss Grace Sharpe
14. Mrs. Swap
15. Gertrude Henderson

Members of the Fairbury Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle from the late 1800s.

CHAPTER 36

Civil War Veteran and Druggist John Zimmerman

John Zimmerman (1837-1914) was a Civil War veteran and a druggist in Fairbury for many years. He was born in Wurtemberg, Germany, in 1837. When he was three, his family emigrated from Germany to Crawford County, Ohio, in 1840. In 1848, when John was eleven years old, the Zimmerman family moved to a farm east of Ottawa.

A major player in John Zimmerman's life story was J. F. Blackburn. John Fletcher Blackburn was also born in 1837 but in Washington, Illinois. He learned the profession of druggist and moved to Fairbury sometime before 1860.

Fairbury was created in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria straight east to the Indiana border. In 1858, John Zimmerman moved to Pontiac. He moved to Fairbury in 1859, just two years after Fairbury was created. John was one of the first businessmen in Fairbury.

On October 12, 1860, Fairbury was granted a charter to form the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, named the Fairbury Livingston Lodge 290. According to the 1878 Livingston County history book, the five charter members were J. F. Blackburn, John J. Young, W. H. Strevell, John T. Bowen, and John Zimmerman. Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Blackburn were friends and were soon to become brother-in-laws.

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbor. The population of Fairbury in 1860 was 262 citizens plus about 600 farmers surrounding Fairbury. Assuming half of the city's population was male, there were about 130 men. This data gives a male population of about 730. So, if 301 men served in the Civil War out of a male population of 730, this means about 41% of the men served.

68% of the Fairbury area veterans lived in Fairbury, 14% lived in Indian Grove Township, 13% lived in Avoca Township, and 5% lived in Belle Prairie Township. There were 31 casualties suffered by Fairbury area veterans, which indicates the casualty rate was about 10%.

The largest military unit comprised of Fairbury area men was the 129th Illinois Infantry Company E, which had 103 men. About 34% of the Fairbury men who served in the Civil War were a part of the 129th Illinois Infantry Company E.

The second largest military unit of Fairbury area men was the 3rd Illinois Cavalry Company K, with 90 men. About 30% of the Fairbury men who served in the Civil War were in the 3rd Illinois Cavalry Company K. The rest of the Fairbury veterans served in many other different units.

On March 14, 1861, J. F. Blackburn married Margaret Hensley in Fairbury. John was 24, and Margaret was 21 when they married. John and Margaret had three children.

In August 1861, just four months after the Civil War started, John Zimmerman enlisted in the 3rd Illinois Cavalry Company K. His home address when he enlisted was Fairbury, Illinois.

In August 1862, J. F. Blackburn enlisted in the 129th Infantry Company E. Mr. Blackburn listed his occupation as a druggist, and his home address was Fairburgh, Illinois.

When Fairbury was created in 1857, an application was sent to Washington to apply for a Post Office. Unfortunately, the paperwork got messed up, and the new Post Office name came back as Fairburgh, not Fairbury. Because of the Civil War, Congress did not fix the mistake until about 1868. Some of the Civil War veterans listed their home address as Fairbury, but many used the Fairburgh address for their Civil War records.

After serving just over a year in the 3rd Illinois Cavalry Company K, John Zimmerman was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in September of 1862.

J. F. Blackburn served in the 129th Infantry Company E for about six months. He resigned from the military in February 1863 because of ill health. His 1905 obituary noted that he suffered the rest of his life from stomach trouble and other disorders related to his Civil War service. Mr. Blackburn went back to Fairbury and started a drug store.

Six months after J. F. Blackburn resigned, John Zimmerman also had to resign due to ill health in August of 1863. Mr. Zimmerman returned to Fairbury and joined the firm of J. F. Blackburn & Co., a drug store.

About four years after John Zimmerman resigned from the military and went to work with J. F. Blackburn, Mr. Zimmerman married Sarah E. Henslee. When they married, Mr. Zimmerman was 30, and Sarah was 23. John and Sarah Zimmerman had no children. Sarah was the younger sister of Margaret Henslee, wife of J. F. Blackburn. Mr. Zimmerman and Mr. Blackburn became brother-in-laws and business partners in Fairbury.

J. F. Blackburn and John Zimmerman ran their drug store business in Fairbury from 1863 until 1876, a period of 13 years. In 1876, Mr. Blackburn decided to sell his interest in the Fairbury drug store to Mr. Zimmerman and moved to Hutchinson, Kansas. Mr. Blackburn opened a drug store in Hutchinson and was one of the first businessmen in that area. Mr. Blackburn died in 1905 in Hutchinson at the age of 68 and was buried there. Mr. Blackburn's wife died in Hutchinson in 1923 at the age of 78 and was buried with her husband.

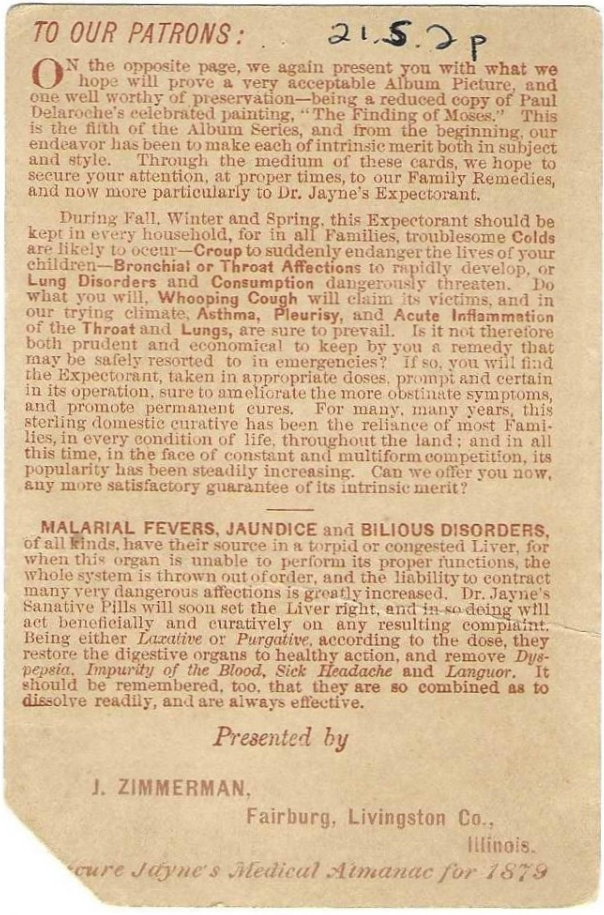
John Zimmerman continued the drug store business in Fairbury until he died in 1914 at the age of 77. He operated this drug store for 38 years after his brother-in-law, J. F. Blackburn, went to Kansas in 1876. In his obituary, it was reported that John Zimmerman served one term as Livingston County Sheriff and had also served as a Fairbury Justice of the Peace. John Zimmerman was interred at the mausoleum in Graceland Cemetery. John Zimmerman's wife died in 1923 at the age of 78. She was buried with her husband in the mausoleum.

John Zimmerman and J. F. Blackburn were the same age, and they were both druggists. They both served in the Civil War and had to resign from their positions as soldiers due to medical conditions. They became

brothers-in-law when they married the Henslee sisters in Fairbury. They were business partners in a Fairbury drugstore for about 13 years. They were among the five charter members who formed the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Fairbury Lodge 290 in 1860.

Both John Zimmerman and J. F. Blackburn contributed to the success of early Fairbury. A review of genealogical records indicates that John Zimmerman was not related to the Zimmerman family, which ran the hardware store in Fairbury in the 1960s.

Front side of a "trade card" for John Zimmerman's drug store in Fairburgh, Illinois.



TO OUR PATRONS: 21.5.2 p

ON the opposite page, we again present you with what we hope will prove a very acceptable Album Picture, and one well worthy of preservation—being a reduced copy of Paul Delaroche's celebrated painting, "The Finding of Moses." This is the fifth of the Album Series, and from the beginning, our endeavor has been to make each of intrinsic merit both in subject and style. Through the medium of these cards, we hope to secure your attention, at proper times, to our Family Remedies, and now more particularly to Dr. Jayne's Expectorant.

During Fall, Winter and Spring, this Expectorant should be kept in every household, for in all Families, troublesome **Colds** are likely to occur—**Croup** to suddenly endanger the lives of your children—**Bronchial or Throat Affections** to rapidly develop, or **Lung Disorders** and **Consumption** dangerously threaten. Do what you will, **Whooping Cough** will claim its victims, and in our trying climate, **Asthma, Pleurisy,** and **Acute Inflammation** of the **Throat** and **Lungs,** are sure to prevail. Is it not therefore both prudent and economical to keep by you a remedy that may be safely resorted to in emergencies? If so, you will find the Expectorant, taken in appropriate doses, prompt and certain in its operation, sure to ameliorate the more obstinate symptoms, and promote permanent cures. For many, many years, this sterling domestic curative has been the reliance of most Families, in every condition of life, throughout the land; and in all this time, in the face of constant and multiform competition, its popularity has been steadily increasing. Can we offer you now, any more satisfactory guarantee of its intrinsic merit?

MALARIAL FEVERS, JAUNDICE and **BILIOUS DISORDERS,** of all kinds, have their source in a torpid or congested Liver, for when this organ is unable to perform its proper functions, the whole system is thrown out of order, and the liability to contract many very dangerous affections is greatly increased. Dr. Jayne's Sanative Pills will soon set the Liver right, and in so doing will act beneficially and curatively on any resulting complaint. Being either *Laxative* or *Purgative*, according to the dose, they restore the digestive organs to healthy action, and remove *Dyspepsia, Impurity of the Blood, Sick Headache* and *Languor*. It should be remembered, too, that they are so combined as to dissolve readily, and are always effective.

Presented by

J. ZIMMERMAN,

Fairburg, Livingston Co.,

Illinois.

Secure Jayne's Medical Almanac for 1879

Back side of a "trade card" for John Zimmerman's drug store in Fairburgh, Illinois. This must have been a reprint of an old ad for John Zimmerman's drug store in Fairbury, because the city name of Fairburgh was changed to Fairbury around 1868 and the document appeared in an 1879 magazine.

CHAPTER 37

Abraham Lincoln Connections

Fairbury, Cropsey, and Pontiac all have several different connections to President Abraham Lincoln. One of these connections is the Strevell House at 401 W. Livingston Street in Pontiac.

Harvey Strevell was born in 1800 and was the son of Woolrick Strevell. Woolrick was a wagon master in Washington's army. Elizabeth Lewis was born in 1800 in Albany, New York. Elizabeth's mother was the niece of Colonel Lewis, a Revolutionary War officer. Harvey Strevell and Elizabeth Lewis married and had a family of six children.

One son of Harvey and Elizabeth Strevell was Jason Woolrick Strevell, born in 1832 in Albany. He worked as a farmhand in the summer, and by saving his earnings, he could attend school in winter. Jason went to work in Peckham and Tremaine's office after taking a course at Rensselaerville Academy in Albany County when he was 18. This company was one of the most prominent law firms in Albany. Jason Strevell studied law for five years and, in 1855, was admitted to the bar. Jason Strevell decided to go west and moved to Pontiac, Illinois, to start his law practice.

Pontiac clockmaker Z. H. Nettleton married Elizabeth Butler Kelley. Their first child was John H. Nettleton, born in 1849. Their second child, Charles Nettleton, was born in 1858. Mr. Nettleton built a small house at 401 W. Livingston Street in Pontiac with unique Carpenter Gothic architecture. Unfortunately, Z. H. Nettleton died in 1857 at the age of 36.

Jason W. Strevell met Mrs. Nettleton in Pontiac and married the young widow. John H. Nettleton kept his last name. Jason Strevell legally adopted Charles Nettleton, and his name was changed to Charles Nettleton Strevell. Jason Strevell had Mr. Nettleton's new house doubled in size but maintained the unique Carpenter Gothic architecture. Jason and Elizabeth Strevell had a daughter, Helen Louise Strevell, born in 1860 in Pontiac.

When Jason Strevell moved from New York to Pontiac, Illinois, in 1855, his brother, William H. Strevell, came with him and settled in Fairbury.

William first married Mary Cannon. When she died, William married Emeline Patton. Both of William's wives were buried in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery. In 1860, William Strevell was one of the five charter members of the Fairbury Livingston Lodge 290 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

Jason Strevell joined the Republican party and became active in Livingston County activities. During the winter of 1859-1860, the young men of Pontiac decided to have guest speakers speak to their group periodically. Jason Strevell arranged for Abraham Lincoln to be a guest speaker at their January 1860 meeting in Pontiac.

At the meeting, Jason Strevell asked Abraham Lincoln what the title of his speech was. Mr. Lincoln replied the title of his written speech was "The Wheel and the Axle." Although no exact copy of this speech exists today, the Wheel and Axle became one of Lincoln's standard stump speeches when he ran for President of the United States. Copies of the standard stump speech still exist today. The speech's main point was that the fundamental distinction between man and beast is man's continuing ability to change his mode of labor through new discoveries and inventions.

After Mr. Lincoln gave his speech, Jason Strevell invited him to his home to wait for the train to take him home. Many guests came to the Strevell house to meet and talk with Mr. Lincoln.

After the guests had left the house, only Mr. Strevell and Mr. Lincoln remained. Mr. Strevell asked Lincoln what his height was. Mr. Lincoln replied that he was six feet, four inches tall. Mr. Strevell had Lincoln stand in a doorway in the house, and he made a notch in the door case to mark his height. Mr. Strevell measured, and Mr. Lincoln was indeed six feet, four inches tall.

Another prominent young Republican in Livingston County in that era was A. J. Cropsey. He was one of the pioneer settlers south of Fairbury and the prime real estate developer when Fairbury was established in 1857. He became a Civil War hero and led the largest group of Fairbury soldiers to serve in the Civil War. Cropsey Township and the village of Cropsey are named after A. J. Cropsey.

The Illinois Republicans held their state convention in Decatur in May of 1860. Jason Strevell was the representative from Pontiac, and A. J. Cropsey was the representative from the Fairbury area. This event was the famous Wigwam Illinois Republican convention held in Decatur, Illinois. The term wigwam was borrowed from the Native American term for a temporary structure. The conference was held on May 9, 1860, involving 2,500 people. A tent 100 feet wide and 70 feet deep was procured from a local circus company to house the crowd. The Illinois Republicans adopted a resolution stating, "That Abraham Lincoln is the first choice of Illinois for the Presidency, and that our delegates be instructed to use all honorable means for his nomination at the Chicago convention, and to cast their votes as a unit for him." Less than a week later, the National Republican Convention opened in Chicago, and the Illinois Republicans kept their word and nominated Lincoln for President. Lincoln won the election and became our 16th President.

Jason Strevell was later elected to the Lower House of the Illinois legislature as a Republican from 1864-1868. Mr. Strevell then became a member of the Senate from 1868-1872. In 1871, he introduced a bill establishing a boy's reformatory at Pontiac. Today, this boy's reformatory is the Pontiac Correctional Center.

In 1879, Jason Strevell got the urge to go west again. The Strevell family moved from Pontiac to Miles City, Montana. Jason Strevell served one term as a district judge and was a member of the Montana constitutional convention. He died in 1903 at the age of 71 and was buried in Chicago.

The adopted son of Jason Strevell, Charles Nettleton Strevell, became a successful businessman in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was an avid collector of historical artifacts and donated his collection to a museum in 1939. Charles Strevell wrote several history books, including information he received from his father about Lincoln's visit to the Strevell house in early 1860.

The Strevell home at 401 West Livingston in Pontiac underwent a ten-year restoration to return it to its condition when Abraham Lincoln spent an afternoon and evening there in 1860. The Livingston County Historical Society completed this renovation in 2018, and the house is periodically open for public tours. The house was recently added to the National

Register of Historic Places. Visitors to the home better appreciate some of the direct connections between our area and President Abraham Lincoln.

The historic Strevell House at 401 W. Livingston Street in Pontiac. Abraham Lincoln spent an afternoon and evening at this house after giving a lecture at the Pontiac Presbyterian Church. The house was recently added to the National Register of Historic Places and feature the very unique Carpenter Gothic Architecture. The Livingston County Historical Society offers periodic free public tours of the home.

CHAPTER 38

History of Fairbury's Two Oldest Parks

Fairbury currently has six different park areas. These include Sunken Park, Veteran's Memorial Park, Munz Nature Park, Livingston Square, Marsh Park, and North Park. Two of the three oldest park areas in Fairbury still exist, but one was eventually replaced by commercial buildings.

Fairbury's oldest park is Marsh Park. Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks through Central Illinois. John Marsh and his son Henry Marsh moved to Fairbury from Washington, Illinois, shortly after the city was founded. John and Henry Marsh created a new addition to Fairbury to build more new homes. As part of the Marsh Addition to Fairbury, they donated one city block to be developed into a park in 1859. In 1862, one mile west of Fairbury, the Marshs dug down 180 feet and found coal. This started a coal mining boom in Central Illinois, with Fairbury eventually having five coal mines.

John Marsh built his home at 200 North Jackson Street, at the southwest corner of Marsh Park. His house still stands today. John installed a fence around the park and planted trees in it. He used it as a cow pasture. He installed turn-styles to allow public access to the park. John Marsh died in 1885, and his son Henry died in 1886. They are both buried in the cemetery in Washington, Illinois.

In 1896, John Marsh's wife sued the Village of Fairbury. She contended the village never improved the land into a park, so ownership should return to her. On November 9, 1896, the Illinois Supreme Court ruled ownership of the property would remain with the Village of Fairbury. This lawsuit prompted our city fathers to start to develop the land into a city park. On June 26, 1903, a new bandstand was built. The Fairbury Band played in a one-hour concert. This bandstand was a unique design, with restrooms in the basement.

By 1928, Marsh Park had a bandstand, swings, teeter-totters, slides, a drinking fountain, a sand pile, tennis courts, and an outdoor oven. Fifty years after the 1903 bandstand was first built, it had decayed and needed

renovation. It was converted into a restroom building. The basement was filled, and the restrooms were on the ground level. The original basement bathroom design was a bad idea because every time it rained, the restrooms flooded!

In 1957, the Lions Club built the three pavilions still standing today. Around the same time, new steel playground equipment was added to the park. The Blade reported that 7,485 people used Marsh Park that summer. Large family reunions held at Marsh Park were very popular in that era.

In 1996, David Surber and other volunteers added the large basketball court. By 2017, Marsh Park had decayed significantly. The Fairbury Improvement Group decided to take on the project of upgrading the whole park. The City of Fairbury provided over 1,100 feet of beautiful, curved new sidewalks. Prairie Lands Foundation provided the balance of the funding to renovate the park.

Before the 2017 renovation, Marsh Park had no centerpiece attraction. It was determined that a large twenty-two-foot diameter gazebo that allowed people to walk through it would be the new centerpiece of the park. The Marsh Park renovation also included refurbishing the 114-year-old restrooms, building a new bandstand, screening in the north pavilion, adding six new comfortable park benches, installing eight new LED sidewalk pole lights, consolidating all the playground equipment into one mulched wood area, and installing of security cameras. Over twenty-five different volunteers donated over 2,000 hours working on this seventeen-week-long project.

A celebration was held in 2018 for the completion of the project to refurbish Marsh Park. Pavilions at Marsh Park and North Park can be reserved by calling 815-674-3660.

In recent years, Fairbury has suffered from the ash bore tree disease, which resulted in eight ash trees having to be removed from Marsh Park. Through various community group donations and funds from the City of Fairbury, new trees are planted each year to replace these ash trees.

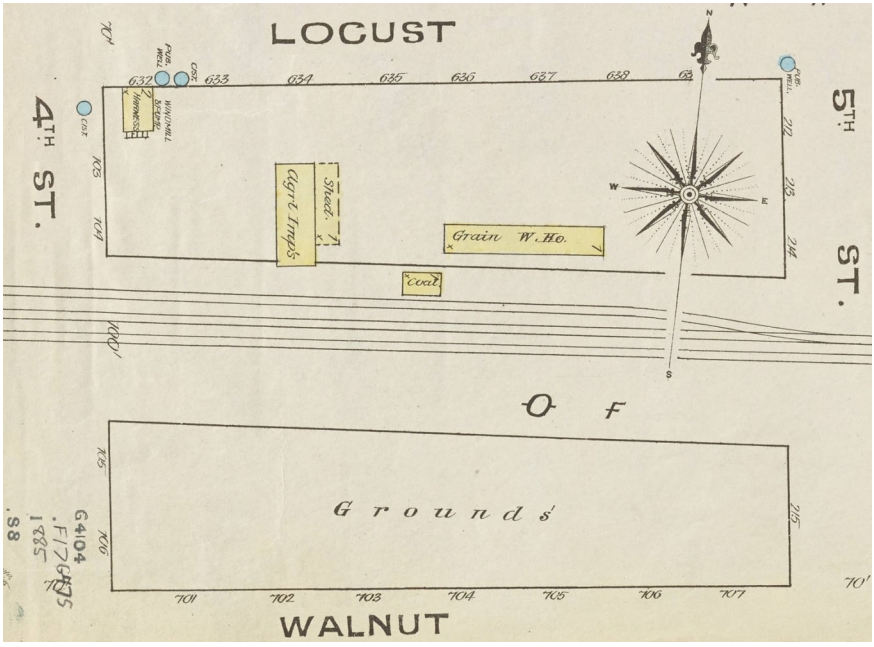
The second oldest park area in Fairbury was called the Commons. Alma Lewis James was a Fairbury historian who wrote the book Stuffed Clubs

and Antimacassars. She also went through the Fairbury Blade newspaper archives and excerpted selected pieces of news. She also wrote short notations that her relatives or friends told her about. This collection of Blade excerpts and family stories were combined into a document called Nicks from the Blade.

In one of these stories, she recounted that in early Fairbury, there was a section of land south of Sunken Park and the railroad tracks. This section called the Commons, included Edith Bartlett Puffer's residence and the Taylor house. Alma recounted the story that this land had been an Indian battlefield, and the last stand was taken where the Stevens Apartments and Amish Church were in the 1970s. As a little girl, Aunt Emma Taylor used to go out on the Commons and pick up arrowheads, and they were just thick where they made that last stand. Unfortunately, there is no historical documentation that supports the story of a Native American battle on these grounds.

Genealogical research indicates that Emma D. Bartlett Taylor lived in Fairbury from 1861 until 1937. She would have been a little girl between 1866 and 1871. The Bartlett House still stands at the southwest corner of Fifth and Walnut Streets. The 1885 Sanborn Insurance map shows the area south of the railroad tracks as "The Grounds."

The 1911 Sanborn Map shows what is now Sunken Park and the land south of the tracks as "The Depot Grounds." At some point, businesses started to occupy the land south of the railroad tracks. Today, no trace remains of the Commons park area except the old Sanborn maps. In a future article, the history of Veteran's Memorial Park, Sunken Park, Livingston Square, North Park, and Munz Park will be reviewed.



The 1885 Sanborn Insurance map shows what is now Sunken Park on the north side of the tracks. The land south of the tracks was a park labeled "Grounds".

CHAPTER 39

Frisby Family Has a Long History in Fairbury

Bill Frisby (1920-2009) was well-known in the Fairbury area. He farmed north of Fairbury and worked as a postal clerk for 21 years at the Fairbury Post Office. Bill's wife, Cathryn Frisby, was a long-time schoolteacher in the Fairbury area.

The story of the Frisby family in Illinois began with the birth of James E. Frisby in Tennessee in 1817. James E. Frisby and his sister moved from Tennessee to Fulton County, Illinois, which is just west of Peoria.

In 1841, James E. Frisby married Mary Elizabeth Christman (1821-1880) in Peoria. James was 24 and Mary was 20 when they married. They had three sons and four daughters. Their children were William, George W., Frank, Rachael, James, Laura, and Dorothy. One of their seven children, William David Frisby, was born in Farmington in Peoria County in 1842.

In 1847, James and Mary Frisby moved from Fulton County to Peoria. Their son, William D. Frisby, was five years old when they moved. He studied at a commercial school in Peoria and helped his father on their farm.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. Twenty years later, in 1877, James Frisby bought 171 acres of land in Indian Grove Township and moved to that location.

Mary Frisby, wife of James E. Frisby, died on their farm in 1880 at the age of 59. She was buried in Graceland Cemetery. Three years later, in 1883, William D. Frisby married Lydia Cottingham. She was born in Peoria. William was 40 and Lydia was 27 when they married. After they married, William rented a farm in Avoca Township, north of Fairbury. William and Lydia Frisby had four children. Their children included Frank, Emma Jane, George, and Harry. Their daughter, Emma Jane, underwent musical training and then taught instrumental music.

William D. Frisby farmed and was a very active horse breeder. William bred the Draft, Clyde, and Norman horse breeds. According to Livingston County Fair Association records, William D. Frisby won more premiums on these grades of horses than any other breeder in Livingston County.

James Frisby sold his farm to Mr. Odell in 1897 and then retired to Fairbury. He died one year later and was buried at Graceland Cemetery. James Frisby was one of the most well-known farmers in Peoria County. In Fairbury, he served 16 years as a Constable and several terms as the School Director.

One of William and Lydia Frisby's children was Frank Frisby. He was born in Fairbury in 1884. In 1916, Frank Frisby married Iva Elizabeth Pool in Peoria. Iva was the daughter of George A. Pool (1850-1923) and Elizabeth C. Ziller (1857-1934) of Weston. Frank was 31, and Iva was 32 when they married. Frank and Iva set up housekeeping on the Jake Ulfers farm north of Fairbury. They had one child, George William "Bill" Frisby, born in 1920.

In 1917, William D. Frisby died in Fairbury at the age of 74. He was buried at Graceland Cemetery. His widow, Lydia Frisby, continued to run the farm with the help of her sons, Harry and George Frisby.

In August of 1926, Lydia Frisby was a 71-year-old widow, and her son Harry Frisby was 35. At 11 AM on August 23, 1926, Harry began to feed the mules on their farm. His mother, Lydia, told Harry that she would put the cow in the barn with its calf, which was born the night before. Harry suggested that she wait and let him put the cow in the barn. Mrs. Frisby said she knew this cow, having worked around it before, and she could do it.

Harry heard his mother crying for help inside the barn a few minutes later. When Harry got in the barn, he found the cow had knocked over his mother in a stall. Harry tried to remove the cow from the stall, but the cow knocked him through a glass window in the barn and also broke his leg. With his broken leg, Harry finally got the cow out of the stall and called the neighbors for help. Mrs. Jacob Ulfers and Mrs. Dan Kelso came to the farm and carried the injured Mrs. Frisby into the house. She died about 45 minutes later, and it was found that the cow had crushed the left side of her

chest. Lydia Frisby, wife of William D. Frisby, died at the age of 71 and was buried with her husband at Graceland Cemetery.

George William "Bill" Frisby graduated with the class of 1937 at Fairbury Township High School. Bill then worked as a bookkeeper for an Allis-Chalmers dealer. World War II started when the Empire of Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

In 1942, George William "Bill" Frisby enlisted in the Reserve Corps Signal Training program. He served in the European theater and received many medals. He was discharged from Camp Grant in Rockford on December 13, 1945. Bill was a Technician Third Grade when he was released from the military.

Frank Frisby died in 1947 at the age of 63. Dan Kelso, E. J. Zeh, Jake Ulfers, Elmer Wink, Newton Simmons, and Darwin Freed were the pallbearers for his funeral. In charge of the flowers were Mrs. John Goold, Mrs. Willard Mack, Mrs. John Mehrkens, Jr., Mrs. Eldon Askew, Mrs. William Freed, Miss Cathryn Wink, and Mrs. Cloyd Wilson, Jr.

One year after the death of Frank Frisby, Bill Frisby married Cathryn Wink in 1948. Cathryn was the daughter of Christian "Bud" Wink (1892-1982) and Florence L. Shepherd (1892-1989). Bill was 28 and Cathryn was 26 when they married. Bill and Cathryn had three children.

Cathryn helped her husband farm and taught school for many years at Fairbury. In addition to farming, Bill did other jobs in the Fairbury area. He worked as a shop foreman for Ziegenhorn's John Deere dealership, sold Pioneer seed corn, and was a postal clerk for 21 years at the Fairbury Post Office. Bill was very active in the Fairbury community. Bill served as a township trustee, served on the school board, and served on the Fairbury Fair board.

In 1951, Iva Frisby, Frank Frisby's wife, died at the age of 67. She was buried in Graceland Cemetery. In 2009, Bill Frisby died at the age of 89. He was buried at the Avoca Township Cemetery. Cathryn Frisby, Bill Frisby's wife, passed away in December 2023 at the age of 102.

The Frisby family arrived in the Fairbury area in 1877, just twenty years after the town was founded in 1857. The family included farmers, horse breeders, teachers, and a World War II veteran. The Frisby family has played an essential role in Fairbury history.

Bill Frisby (1920-2013) and Cathryn Frisby (1922-2023).

CHAPTER 40

Fairbury Soldier Killed at Battle of Iwo Jima

One of the most iconic battles of World War II took place on the island of Iwo Jima. The Battle of Iwo Jima resulted in more than 26,000 American casualties, including approximately 6,800 killed. The battle, which lasted 36 days, saw fierce resistance from the Japanese, making it one of the bloodiest battles in Marine Corps history. Fairbury Marine Rudy Jarvis was killed on Iwo Jima on February 22, 1945.

Celebration erupted when the first Marine patrol reached the summit of Mount Suribachi on February 23, 1945, and raised a small American flag. A short while later, another detachment returned to the peak to replace the flag with a second, larger one. Associated Press photographer Joe Rosenthal captured the moment on film. Although the second flag raising was hardly noticed in Iwo Jima, Rosenthal's dramatic photograph appeared on the front pages of newspapers nationwide. It became one of the iconic images of World War II and one of the most reproduced photographs in history. Rosenthal's photograph was awarded the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for Photography and was the centerpiece of a war-bond poster that helped raise more than $26 billion that year.

Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the flag raising on Iwo Jima was the model for the U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA. The monument, which was dedicated in 1954, is a bronze statue based on Rosenthal's iconic image.

Rudy Jarvis's life story began with the 1889 birth of his father, Bishop Martin Jarvis, in Kentucky. He was the son of William L. Jarvis (1863-1958) and Nancy Bell Hay (1867-1923).

Laura Frazier was born in 1893 in Kentucky, the daughter of William John Frazier and Sarah A. Gresham (1865-1900). Bishop and Laura were married in 1909 in Birksville, Kentucky. He was 20, and she was 15 when they married. Birksville is in south-central Kentucky, about 80 miles east of Bowling Green, Kentucky. They had three sons and two daughters. Their children included Malcolm "Mack" Jarvis, Mabel Clarice Jarvis,

Mildred Lucille Jarvis, Kenneth Taylor Jarvis, and William Rudolph "Rudy" Jarvis.

According to the 1930 Census, the Jarvis family lived in Saunemin, Illinois. Bishop Martin Jarvis was a 42-year-old farmer; his wife, Laura, was 38. The children living at home were Mabel, age 16; Mildred, age 13; Kenneth, age 11; and William Rudolph, age 8. Son Malcolm Jarvis was 21 and no longer lived at home.

In 1934, Mildred Jarvis married Ralph Runyon. He and she were both 18 when they married. They had four sons. They divorced, and she married John Maillet sometime before 1976. Mildred was 60, and John was 54 in 1976. John Maillet was a glass cutter by trade. He worked at the Bach Lumberyard and later operated his own Maillet Glass Co. business with his shop in a small building at 107 N. Calhoun in the 1980s. Ralph Runyon, her first husband, died in 1986 at the age of 70. Mildred died in 1990 at the age of 73. John Maillet, her second husband, died in 2002 at the age of 80.

On January 18, 1936, Mabel Jarvis married Arthur "Roy" Melvin. Roy Melvin was very well known in Fairbury. He owned and operated Melvin's Hotel, later renamed the Indian Trail Motel, on Route 24. Roy Melvin was a long-time Fairbury High School math teacher. When they married, Roy was 23, and Mabel was 22. They had two children. Roy died in 1982 at the age of 70, and Mabel died in 2009 at the age of 95.

On September 11, 1936, Malcolm "Mack" Jarvis married Mary Gray Kornegay in Chicago. He was 27 at the time, and she was 23. They had no children. In 1967, they moved to Fairbury, and he owned and operated Jarvis TV. Mack died in 1993 at the age of 84, and his wife died in 2004 at the age of 91. He served in the U.S. Navy in World War II.

Rudy Jarvis graduated from Fairbury Township High School with the Class of 1939. There were 45 members of this class. His classmates included Willard Bess, Harold Ward, and Cathryn Wink-Frisby. He participated in football, basketball, and track.

After graduation, Rudy worked at the Ellwood Ordinance Plant, part of the Joliet Arsenal complex. This site made bombs, shells, mines, and detonators. In the 1940 Census, the Bishop Martin Jarvis family lived at

310 Jackson Street in Fairbury. He reported being a laborer, and his highest grade completed was the 8th grade. Bishop was 51, his wife Laura was 45, his son Kenneth was 21, and his son Rudolph was 18.

On June 30, 1941, Kenneth Jarvis enlisted in the U.S. Army. Kenneth Jarvis married Luella Jane Nossette on December 17, 1942. He was 23, and she was 27 when they married. They had two children. Kenneth Jarvis was discharged from the Army on November 20, 1943. He became a chiropractor in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for 35 years. Dr. Kenneth T. Jarvis died at the age of 64 in 1983. He was buried near his parents and brother Rudy Jarvis in Graceland. A military veteran marker is near his grave since he was a World War II veteran.

About six months after Kenneth Jarvis enlisted in the U.S. Army, his brother, Rudy Jarvis, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on December 5, 1941, just two days before Pearl Harbor. He was assigned to a paratrooper school.

For America, World War II officially began on December 8, 1941, when Congress declared war on Japan in response to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

Bishop M. Jarvis filled out his WWII draft registration card sometime in 1941, which stated that he lived at 608 First Street in Fairbury. His employer was Caterpillar Tractor Co., and he worked at Building X in East Peoria. The Caterpillar East Peoria plants manufactured many military-related items needed to fight World War II.

Rudy Jarvis completed his paratrooper training on March 29, 1943, 16 months after his enlistment. He was then assigned to the 5th Division of the USMC and sent to an advanced training school in California. On July 6, 1944, he was sent to the Pacific Theater.

After the U.S. Navy bombed Iwo Jima for several days, the first Marines landed on the island on February 19, 1945. By February 22, the battle was in its fourth day. The Japanese defenders, commanded by General Tadamichi Kuribayashi, were deeply entrenched in a vast network of bunkers, caves, and tunnels, making progress for the Marines extremely

difficult and costly. U.S. Marines were engaged in intense, close-quarters combat as they attempted to advance northward from the beaches. By this point, the Marines had established a beachhead but faced fierce resistance from Japanese positions, particularly around heavily fortified areas such as "the Quarry" and the approaches to Mount Suribachi.

The Japanese defensive strategy relied on allowing the Americans to land with minimal initial opposition, then unleashing devastating artillery, mortar, and machine-gun fire once the beaches were crowded with troops and equipment. The Marines were forced to fight for every yard, with advances measured in feet due to the density of Japanese defenses and the effectiveness of their fire.

Nighttime saw Japanese infiltration tactics, with soldiers slipping behind U.S. lines to lay mines and launch surprise attacks, further hampering American progress and increasing casualties. U.S. forces began to rely heavily on flamethrowers, grenades, and specialized tanks (flamethrower-equipped Sherman tanks) to clear out the well-protected Japanese positions. Fairbury Marine Rudy Jarvis was killed in action on February 22, 1945. The battle lasted for 32 more days after Rudy was killed. In the Battle of Iwo Jima, 6,821 U.S. Marines lost their lives, and an additional 19,217 Marines were injured.

Every veteran can apply for and receive a free gravestone from the U.S. government. On May 1, 1948, Bishop M. Jarvis, father of deceased veteran William Rudolph Jarvis, applied for a free flat granite military gravestone. B. M. Jarvis was living at 513 W. Chestnut Street in Fairbury. The request was approved, and the gravestone was shipped to George L. Mowry at Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

This gravestone was placed just northeast of the Mausoleum along U.S. Route 24 in Graceland Cemetery. Bishop Martin Jarvis died at the age of 86 in Fairbury. His wife, Laura Jarvis, died in 1979 at the age of 76. They were buried in Graceland Cemetery. They added the notation on their gravestone, "Son William R., Co. D., 3rd Div. USMC, Died on Iwo Jima, 1921-1945."

Three sons of Bishop Martin Jarvis served in the military during World War II. Son Rudy Jarvis was killed on Iwo Jima in one of the bloodiest battles ever fought by the U.S. Marine Corps.

PFC "Rudy" Jarvis (1921-1945), United States Marine Corps, killed on Iwo Jima.

CHAPTER 41

Fairbury's Smallest Park

Many residents and visitors like to see the colorful and beautiful flowers in Fairbury's smallest park at the Locust and First Streets intersection. For the past several years, several volunteers, including Karen Munz and SELCAS members, have planted and cared for these beautiful flowers in this park.

For such a small park, Livingston Square is steeped in local Fairbury history. Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. John and his son Henry Marsh came to Fairbury when the town was founded. They dug and found coal about one mile west of Fairbury along Route 24. This discovery of coal set off a coal mining boom in Central Illinois. John and Henry Marsh added the Marsh Addition to Fairbury on the west side of town. They donated one square block for Marsh Park. They also set up a block by the current water tower called Livingston Square or the Arcade Block. Their plan was for businesses to congregate around this block's west end of town. A local feud developed to see whether the city would primarily develop on the West End or the East End of town. This feud resulted in many business buildings being burned down in Fairbury in the 1870s and 1880s. The feud finally ended, and most of the businesses in Fairbury were located east of First Street.

The area northwest of the First and Locust Streets intersection has served several functions over the years. It was the site of Fairbury's first hand-dug well for public drinking water and had the first wood water tower. Several deep wells were drilled and used on this site until they were relocated to south First Street just north of the Indian Creek bridge.

Fairbury's first fire engine was housed in the first story of the old City Hall. It was later moved to an old shed along First Street.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee was formed in April 1995. Other groups helping to improve the downtown were the City of Fairbury Park Committee and the Fairbury Association of Commerce. One of the key members of the Downtown Revitalization Committee was Joan

Steidinger (1933-2023). She was the wife of James Steidinger (1931-2022) of Steidinger Tire and ran a business called Bell Book & Candle.

Other members of the Revitalization Committee were John Tollensdorf Jr., who operated the Fairbury Paint Store just east of the Bluestem Bank, and John Bellot (1940-2024), who ran a drug store across the street from Veterans Memorial Park. Other members included Bob Nussbaum Sr. (1927-1996) and his son Bob Nussbaum, who operated Bob Nussbaum Plumbing & Heating. Local attorneys Steve Weeks and Tom Brucker also helped in this effort.

The Revitalization Committee's goal was to spruce up the four-block stretch of Locust Street that formed the heart of the city's retail community. The combined efforts of the three groups resulted in several major accomplishments, including more than a dozen new decorative street lights, parking upgrades, wood planters with trees in them, and the resurfacing of Locust Street. The Future Farmers of America and the Boy Scouts also helped with this community effort.

Another goal was adding the 1892 old City Hall to the National Register of Historic Places. Jack Tollensdorf conducted the extensive research required to complete the application for the building's addition. Old City Hall was approved to be added to the National Registry of Historic Places in 1996. Jack Tollensdorf also did the research required to add the historic Beach House on Hickory Street to the National Register in 1996.

Plans were made to replace the concrete water fountain in Central Park (now Veteran's Memorial Park) with a new wood gazebo. Bluestem National Bank donated the funds required to purchase the new wood gazebo, which was installed on top of the old concrete fountain in the Fall of 1997.

Another goal was to transform a gravel parking lot northwest of the intersection of Locust and First Streets into Livingston Square Park. This goal was accomplished in 1997, and a plaque was placed in the park. The plaque recounts that the patron contributors for this project were Bluestem National Bank, the City of Fairbury, Elite Landscaping, Richard & Margo Phelps, Jim Steidinger, Joan Steidinger, Kathy Durham, Jerry Durham, Nancy Ifft, Alvin Shulman, Walt Kohlmann, and Ruth Teubel.

Service clubs and organizations that helped on this project included the Fairbury Lions Club, Slagel's Tree Space, Indian Creek Materials, Lioness Club, Garden Club, Fairview Haven, A Cut Above, Tri-County Citizens for Health, Livingston Lodge #290 I.O.O.F., Rebekah Charity Home #112, Helen Lewis Smith Pavilion, PCHS Ag Sciences Class of 1997, Daisy Troop #516, and Maurice Steidinger.

The plaque also notes that memorials were made for James Brown, Leroy Neiswander, and Gertrude Monroe Stephens.

In 1997, Fairbury attorney Tom Brucker applied to enter Fairbury in the state-wide competition for the Governor’s Home Town Award. In June, Fairbury was notified that it had won the Governor’s Cup top prize in the 1997 Governor’s Home Town Award program.

After Livingston Square Park was created in 1997, several other changes were made adjacent to this small park. The Brian J. Munz Safety Complex, built just west of the park, houses SELCAS and the Fairbury Fire Department. This new facility was dedicated on July 31, 2015.

Although Livingston Square Park is Fairbury's smallest park, it is full of local history dating back to 1857, when the city was first created. Thanks to the efforts of several volunteers, many citizens and visitors enjoy the colorful flowers in this unique small park.

Karen Munz taking care of Fairbury's smallest park, the Livingston Square Park, at the northwest corner of First and Locust Streets.

CHAPTER 42

Railroad Scheming and Trickery

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria east to the Indiana border. Just 15 years later, in 1872, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad came to town, giving Fairbury its second railroad track. Both of these significant events involved quite a bit of scheming and trickery.

When the first railroad, the Peoria & Oquawka (later renamed the TP&W Railroad), started moving east from Peoria, several Fairbury area farmers wanted the tracks to run through their farms. Relatively cheap farmland could be converted to residential building lots for a new town along the railroad, and a lot of money could be made.

25-year-old Civil Engineer Octave Chanute (1832-1910) was the man in charge of building this railroad. Late in his life, Mr. Chanute changed his focus from Civil Engineering to Aeronautical Engineering, and he assisted the Wright Brothers in their efforts to build the first airplane. Chanute Air Force Base at Rantoul, Illinois, was named in honor of Octave Chanute.

Caleb Patton was one of the farmland owners competing to run the new railroad through his land. Mr. Patton proposed offering half of the new building lots in the new town to the railroad to win this competition if Mr. Chanute chose his farm. Octave Chanute wisely accepted Caleb Patton's proposal. Some of the lots in downtown Fairbury are still owned by the TP&W Railroad today.

Alma Lewis James (1899-1979) was a Fairbury historian and author. Her most famous book about Fairbury history was titled ***Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars***. She released her first edition in 1967 and her second edition in 1977. In her book, Alma recounted that when Octave Chanute agreed to run the new railroad tracks through Caleb Patton's farm, Mr. Patton laid his farm out into building lots. A few houses and businesses had buildings built before the railroad tracks even arrived at Fairbury.

As the new railroad tracks approached present-day Fairbury, many citizens threatened to get a court injunction if Chanute did not run his tracks around the new settlement on Patton's farm.

Octave Chanute faced a dilemma. If he could run the railroad through Mr. Patton's farm, he and the railroad would own half of the building lots. If he diverted the railroad around the new settlement, he would lose ownership of half of the new town, and changing the route of the tracks would cost more money.

The State of Illinois had recently passed a new law that said if new railroad tracks were laid and a locomotive ran over them, the tracks could not be legally removed. Mr. Chanute also knew the Livingston County courthouse in Pontiac was not open on weekends, and no injunctions stopping his railroad could be issued on weekends.

Octave Chanute developed a unique plan to build his new tracks through Patton's farm. He had the railroad building crews build the tracks on both sides of the new little settlement on Patton's farm. On the weekend, he had the crew work through the night, install the tracks on Patton's farm, and quickly run a locomotive over the tracks. By Monday morning, the tracks were successfully laid through Patton's farm, and the village of Fairbury was created.

The ***Founding of Fairbury, Illinois***, by Dale C. Maley, details the competitive battle between farmers to get the railroad run through their farmland. This book can be borrowed from the Dominy Memorial Library, or printed copies can be purchased at Fairbury Furniture in the Walton Building.

John and his son Henry Marsh were early Fairbury citizens. In 1862, they dug and found coal 180 feet deep, about one mile west of Fairbury. They set up the Marsh Addition to Fairbury on the village's west side so more houses could be built in Fairbury. They also donated one square block of land in the Marsh Addition to be made into a public park, now named Marsh Park.

John Marsh lived in a house just southwest of Marsh Park that still stands. John and Henry Marsh's goal was to develop the business section of

Fairbury on the west end of town. Another group wanted the business section to develop on Fairbury's east side. According to Alma Lewis James, Fairbury historian, this set off a several-decade-long feud between the West and East Enders.

In 1872, it was announced that a second railroad was coming to Fairbury called the Chicago & Paducah Railroad (later renamed the Wabash Railroad). The West and East Enders began to scheme how the new railroad could benefit their two factions.

John Marsh secretly lobbied the railroad officials. He succeeded and got the railroad to agree to bring the tracks into his west end of town and then head directly south to Strawn, bypassing the city's East end.

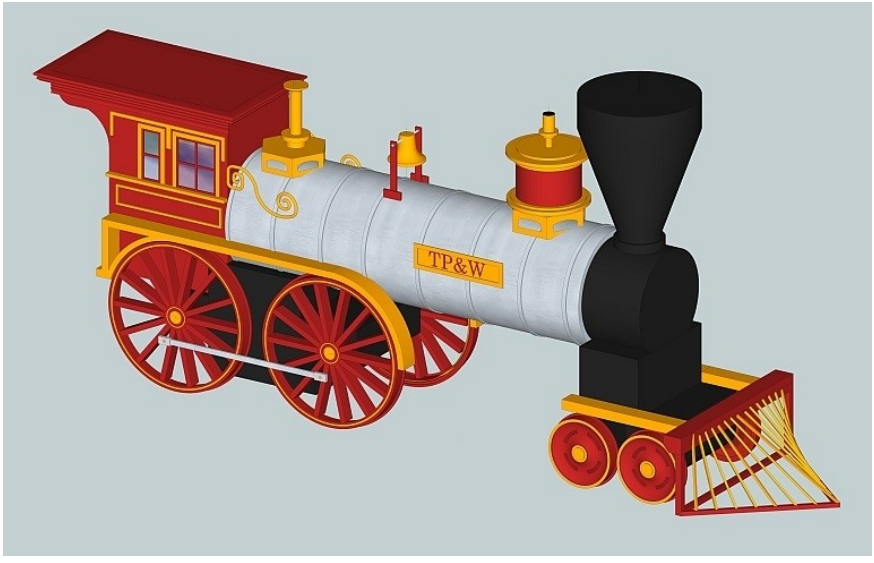
The East Enders were very dismayed when they learned the new railroad would bypass their East End of town, but they did not give up their cause.

On Saturday, the railroad construction had completed laying track from McDowell to the west side of Fairbury on John Marsh's land. The railroad's President came to Fairbury, and John and his son Henry Marsh conducted a big celebration party at McDowell Hall on the West Side.

The railroad President and the Marsh faction members had bad hangovers on Sunday morning after the big celebration party. They did not notice that with the assistance of armed guards, the East Enders laid the new railroad tracks across Fairbury such that the new railroad turned south towards Strawn on the east side of Fairbury. They could not get hold of a locomotive to run over the new tracks until the next day, but the new rails stayed in place. The result was that the new railroad equally served Fairbury's West and East ends.

Just a few years later, the branch of the Chicago & Paducah from Fairbury to Strawn was removed because other north-south railroads served this route. The branch from Streator to Fairbury was later renamed the Wabash Railroad. This railroad ran until sometime in the late 1970s, when the track was removed from Pontiac to Fairbury. The outline of this track can be seen where intersecting roads go in an east-west direction.

Before the advent of the automobile in the early 1900s, railroads were the most important means of transportation. New towns, like Fairbury, sprang up where new railroads were installed. The railroads provided a way for farmers to get their products to markets, and they brought in vital supplies and merchandise. Fairbury was created when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. Just 15 years after the town was founded in 1857, Fairbury got a second railroad named the Chicago & Paducah. These two railroads helped Fairbury grow and become a thriving small town in Central Illinois.



This is an illustration of one of the first steam locomotives owned by the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad (later renamed the TP&W). It must have been quite a sight to see this colorful locomotive chugging along and belching heavy smoke moving every day through Fairbury.

CHAPTER 43

Fairbury's Newest Park

Fairbury's newest park is the Munz Nature Park, located on South First Street just north of the bridge across Indian Creek. According to a June 16, 2018, Pantagraph article, the land was donated to the Prairie Lands Foundation by the family of Conrad and Catherine Munz of Fairbury.

In that article, Prairie Lands Foundation president David Hammer said, "I think it's a nice enhancement of additional green space for the community. It's a place where people can ride their bicycles and walk around. There will be some benches to sit and enjoy nature. People could do some great bird watching, too."

This park is just over 5.5 acres and features a half-mile walking trail. Indian Creek forms part of the border of this park. The new park was dedicated on June 18, 2018.

The park features several areas of different types of vegetation native to Illinois. Over the years since it was created, many volunteers have planted trees and plants in the park.

Conrad Munz Sr. and his son Conrad Munz Jr. were early entrepreneurs and businessmen in Fairbury. Their businesses included a sorghum mill, a sand pit, and an ice delivery business.

The elder Munz was born in 1841 in Sulgen, Switzerland. He was the son of Jacob Munz and Elizabeth Altweg. In 1871, Conrad Munz Sr. married Catharina Blumer in Switzerland. Conrad and Catharina moved from Switzerland to the Forrest, Illinois, area two years later. Son Conrad Munz Jr. was born in Forrest in 1887. He married Ida Metz in 1914.

In 1888, Conrad Munz Sr. moved his family from Forrest to a 200-acre farm just south of Fairbury. He grew sorghum on his farm and built a factory to convert sorghum to molasses.

In 1895, Conrad Munz Sr. dug a hole on his farm to bury a dead horse for John Bolliger. He noted that gravel and sand were found just below the topsoil. This discovery prompted the formation of the Fairbury Sand and Gravel Works, which was in business from 1895 to 1940. Conrad Munz J. was the proprietor. At its peak, the sandpit could pump 100 to 200 cubic yards of sand daily. The resultant pond was commonly called Munz's sandpit.

Conrad Munz Sr. suffered a major accident in Forrest in 1897. He fell under the wheels of a moving train car, which cut off his right leg above the knee. He was fifty-six years old when the accident occurred. He survived this horrible accident.

In 1907, the molasses factory burned down. A new and larger factory was built. The new factory could produce thousands of gallons of molasses per year. This new factory had a tall brick smokestack. The second factory eventually burned down, leaving only the tall brick smokestack. This smokestack was removed just a few years ago. It was just east of the golf course clubhouse.

In 1908, Conrad Munz Sr. embarked on another business enterprise. He built a large ice house just north of the Munz sandpit. The ice house was sixty feet by one hundred fifty feet and divided into four sections. Each section was filled separately during the winter. The ice house was built right next to the Munz sandpit to minimize the distance the ice had to be moved from the sandpit.

Each year in the winter, ice was cut from the Munz sandpit. An inclined ramp moved the ice from the sandpit to the ice house. The ice blocks were packed in sawdust to prevent them from melting. Each day, a horse-drawn wagon would carry the ice blocks up and down the streets of Fairbury. The ice delivery man would take a block of ice to each home and place it in the icebox. The homeowner often displayed a tag on the door telling the delivery man what size block they wanted. The ice was usually sold in twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five, and 100-pound blocks.

The block of ice was usually placed in the top of the insulated icebox. Food was stored in the lower compartments. The older iceboxes were

made of wood with tin inside to contain the water. Later, iceboxes were insulated steel boxes. Several Fairbury homes had a special icebox where the delivery man did not have to come into the house. He first opened a door outside the house. He then slid the ice block right into the icebox inside the home. One of the homes with this special ice box was at 518 South Third Street.

The 1920 Blade newspaper pronounced Conrad Munz Jr. as Fairbury's new Ice Baron. He bought out his competitor, M. M. Jacobs, and renamed the business the Fairbury Ice Company.

In 1925, Conrad Munz Jr. bought the Perlee cold storage building at 6th and Walnut. He converted it into a combination ice house and cold storage building. Stanley Perlee built this structure in 1881 as cold storage for his produce business.

In 1930, the Blade published the first advertisement for an electric refrigerator. It was a General Electric brand that sold for $205, which in today's dollars would be $3,122. Nussbaum Brothers, the "Scientific Plumbers and Contractors, " sold the refrigerators."

In 1931, Conrad Munz Sr. died at age 90. In the mid-1930s, Conrad Munz Jr. started selling about sixty electric refrigerators a year.

In 1945, ice-cutting operations ceased. Electric refrigerators had largely replaced iceboxes. The warehouse next to the sandpit was abandoned and burned down in 1948. In 1956, the old ice house at Sixth and Walnut was torn down to make room for an implement storage facility.

In 1961, Conrad Munz Jr. died. His death ended the era of home delivery of ice to stock the iceboxes of Fairbury citizens.

In June 2021, a historic mural was installed in the Munz Nature Park. This mural chronicles the lives of Conrad Munz Sr. In addition to photos of Conrad Munz Sr. (1841-1931) and Catherina Blumier (1849-1926), the mural also includes old photographs of the sorghum works in 1906, the beginning of digging the sandpit, and a 1941 photograph of cutting ice on the sandpit.

If you have not visited Fairbury's newest park, it is easy to visit and take the half-mile walking tour around its perimeter.

Historic mural at the Munz Nature Park documenting the lives of Conrad Munz Sr. and his wife Catherina Blumier.

CHAPTER 44

History of Three Larger Parks

Three of Fairbury's larger parks include Sunken Park, North Park, and Veterans Memorial Park.

Veteran's Memorial Park
After Marsh Park and the Commons area, the next area to be developed into a city park was just east of old City Hall. This whole block was occupied by Von Tobel's lumberyard buildings on the 1885 Sanborn maps. Citizens thought the lumberyard was unsightly and wanted a lovely park, so visitors on the train had a good first impression of Fairbury. In 1900, a group of citizens approached Von Tobel and offered him $400 to move his lumberyard to the southwest corner of Seventh and Locust Streets. While negotiations were taking place with Von Tobel, the Wilson Lumber company bought the inventory and buildings. The area was then completely cleared.

The new park site had just one problem: it was depressed or sunken two to three feet. The citizens tried filling it with sand from the Munz sand pit south of town. This plan did not work well. Then, the TP&W railroad offered to bring in fill dirt on flatbed cars if volunteers would unload it. Many volunteers helped move the fill material from the train cars to fill up the park. In 1902, the Fairbury GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) Post 75 donated two Civil War cannons to the park. Women's groups held many fundraisers to pay for the other items needed for the park. The new park was donated to the city and was named Central Park.

In 1921, about twenty years after the citizens got Central Park built, the TP&W railroad proposed building a new roundhouse on the same site. Although it was desirable to have the new roundhouse in Fairbury, citizens did not want to exchange their beautiful new park for a "smoke-vomiting roundhouse." The railroad plans for the new roundhouse in Central Park were rejected.

In the early 1970s, the fountain often became a huge bubble generator. The laundry mats sold miniature boxes of laundry soap in a vending machine, and teenagers would dump the whole box of soap into the fountain.

In 1997, Bluestem Bank donated funds to purchase a gazebo, which was installed on top of the old fountain. At the time, the two old Civil War cannons were temporarily removed. Arrowhead Lodge used donated labor and materials to reinstall the cannons in the park in 2005.

In 2008, John Tollensdorf, Sr., donated the old Isaac Walton school bell to the City of Fairbury. It was installed in the park with an iron fence around it.

The park's east end was then updated to honor our military veterans. In 2012, the Fairbury City Council voted to change the name from Central Park to Veteran's Memorial Park. In 2016, the Fairbury Improvement Group added five historical murals to the park. These murals cover the railroad, coal mining, Frances Townsend, the Fairbury Fair and racetrack, and John Virgin. The Fairbury Garden Club maintains all the beautiful flowers and plants in this park.

SUNKEN PARK

Sunken Park is one of Fairbury's history mysteries. Nobody is exactly sure why this area is sunken thirty-six inches into the ground. Fern Wharton was a reporter for the Blade in the 1980s. In her 1985 column, she asked the readers if anyone knew why this area was sunken, and none of the readers could answer this question.

The most logical explanation is that in 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad excavated this area for dirt to help build the railroad bed. In her Nicks from the Blade writings, Alma Lewis James noted that grocery stores on Locust Street used to dispose of their spoiled food in this depressed area. She also said that citizens used it as the city dump until Hi Taylor became Street Commissioner and stopped this practice. Alma said that after the citizens built Central Park, they decided it would be stylish and different to have a "Sunken Garden."

The early Sanborn Insurance maps drawn between 1885 and 1911 show grain storage buildings located in the depressed area. Several photographs from this era also show frame buildings in the depressed area.

The earliest reference to Sunken Park occurred in the Blade in July 1915. Some boys in Sunken Park ignited some skyrockets. Unfortunately, one of the skyrockets entered the open window of the German Apostolic Church in the middle of Sunday services. The church congregation was shocked, but nobody was injured.

The first mention of Sunken Park in the Pantagraph occurred in June of 1919. The Pantagraph noted there would be a July 4th celebration with a band concert and a luncheon in honor of Fairbury World War I soldiers in Sunken Park.

There is a circa 1914 panoramic photo of Sunken Park filled with early motorcyclists and their riders. Over the years, Sunken Park has been used for band concerts, pep rallies, dances, ice skating, and pet parades.

In June 1985, a controversy developed about Sunken Park. Fosdick Poultry announced plans to fill in Sunken Park and build a new processing plant on that site. Fortunately for the park, the Fairbury City Council, in a 5-2 vote, vetoed the plan to convert the park to a food processing plant.

In the summer months, children continue to play football and baseball at Sunken Park. For a couple of years, the park hosted the popular food festival A Local Taste: Flavors from the Farm.

North Park

Fairbury's largest park is North Park. It includes tennis courts, basketball courts, sand volleyball courts, a baseball field, soccer fields, two open pavilions, one restroom facility, a large screened-in pavilion, and an eight-foot-wide concrete walking trail that extends around the perimeter of the park and is very popular with citizens.

Construction of North Park started in 1998. Floyd and Marion Stafford donated funds to build the park, a joint project between the City of Fairbury and the Prairie Lands Foundation. The last part of the project was

the sizeable screened-in pavilion, which was completed in June 2004. The Marion McDowell Stafford Charitable Trust and the John and Tula Wade Endowment Fund donated funds to build this pavilion.

The 1967 Fairbury Chamber of Commerce booklet included this photo of the fountain that used to be in Veterans Memorial Park (formerly Central Park). In that era, the two Civil War cannons were located just south of this fountain.

CHAPTER 45

Bill's Dairy

The U.S. government rationed gasoline and tires during World War II to support the war effort. In 1942, Sam Meyer's Meyer Dairy and M. D. Fugate's Oakwood Dairy ran an ad in the Blade newspaper. They announced that because of rationing, they would no longer deliver milk to the homes in Fairbury. To buy milk, Fairbury citizens had to go to one of the nine grocery stores in Fairbury at that time. This 1942 Blade ad documents the existence of two dairies and nine grocery stores in Fairbury at that time.

In 1947, a new dairy business called Bill's Dairy was started in Fairbury. The story of Bill's Dairy began with the birth of James Howard Piercy in Barren County, Kentucky, in 1886. Barren County is in south-central Kentucky.

James H. Piercy (1886-1959) married Minnie Claudia Davis (1890-1930), also from Barren County, Kentucky. One of the children of James and Minnie Piercy was William Childress "Bill" Piercy. He was born in Barren County in 1914.

Minnie Davis had a brother named Charles L. Davis (1888-1940). He married Beulah J. Harris (1895-1966). One of their children was Howard Marvin Davis, born in 1923. Howard Davis was Bill Piercy's first cousin. Howard was about nine years younger than Bill Piercy.

In the 1920 Census, Bill Piercy was five years old and lived with his parents in Temple Hill in Barren County, Kentucky. His father, James Piercy, was 33, and his mother, Minnie Piercy, was 29. Bill's sister, Annie J. Piercy, who was less than one year old, also lived in the household.

Unfortunately, Minnie Piercy, age 40, died of tuberculosis in her lungs on January 17, 1930, in Barren County, Kentucky. When she died, son Bill Piercy was 15, daughter Annie Piercy was 10, and son Charlie Piercy was age five. When the 1930 Census was taken a few months later, the family lived in Barren County.

In 1940, Bill Piercy married Marcella Lurana Gilbert. She was born in 1921 in Marengo, Iowa. Her parents were Clarence E. Gilbert (1881-1942) and May Belle Taylor (1889-1973). Bill was 25, and Marcella was 18 when they married. They had four children. Their children included Norman, Sharon, Brian, and Phyllis.

Bill and Marcella Piercy lived in Wisconsin, where Bill worked on several dairy farms. In 1946, the Bill Piercy family moved from Wisconsin to Illinois so Bill could work on an Illinois dairy farm.

The Roszell family operated a huge dairy named Roszell's Dairy in Peoria, and they built a massive building for their milk and ice cream factory. In 1935, the National Products Corporation, which later became Kraft Foods, created the Sealtest brand. Sealtest purchased the Roszell ice cream factory building, which is now known as the Sealtest building and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 1947, the J. D. Roszell company was an affiliate of Sealtest. They were looking for a milk and ice cream distributor for the Fairbury area. Bill Piercy accepted this position and moved his family to Fairbury. They eventually lived in a house at the east end of Locust Street.

Bill walked the streets of Fairbury and started signing up citizens for home milk delivery. All Roszell distributors operated ice cream dairy stores along with milk delivery routes. Bill managed to get a room in an old building on Second Street by the railroad tracks for his store. He opened his store in July 1947. Bill sold up to six hundred gallons of ice cream monthly in the summer, all hand-dipped into pints and quarts.

Bill and Marcella Piercy's son Brian was born at the Fairbury Hospital in 1948. At that time, Frank Cox was the hospital manager. Mr. Cox gave the contract for supplying milk to the hospital to the Piercy dairy.

Also in 1948, Bill's first cousin, Howard Davis (1923-1975), became a partner in the dairy business. Howard and his wife, Zelma Davis, moved to Fairbury. The Dairy bought a second truck and began moving into neighboring towns, including Chenoa, Strawn, Lexington, Towanda, Chatsworth, Forrest, and Pontiac. Eventually, they operated three trucks.

Bill's Dairy got its most significant break in 1950 when Dave Steffen and his wife came to Fairbury and opened their grocery store. Bill's Dairy got the contract to provide milk and ice cream to Dave's Supermarket. Because the ice cream was now available at Dave's Supermarket, Mr. Piercy closed his retail store on Second Street. He moved the milk cooler onto a concrete slab in the back of his house on East Locust Street.

By 1959, Dave's Supermarket purchased $800 a week from the Piercy Dairy. That sales amount would be equivalent to $8,763 in today's dollars.

In 1959, a retailer's cooperative serving independent supermarkets in Illinois was known as Certified Grocers Midwest. This cooperative, founded in 1940, was a Retailer-Owned Food Distributors & Associates member. It helped independent stores compete with larger chains by allowing them to pool resources for purchasing and advertising while still maintaining individual ownership. Dave's Supermarket was part of this cooperative group at that time.

Unfortunately for Bill's Dairy, the Certified Grocers group developed its own milk brand to be sold in all the stores that belonged to that group. Bill's Dairy lost the contract for Dave's Supermarket, and it lost half of its business within a month of the change. It took two years to build its sales back up to the level when it still had the contract to supply milk to Dave's Supermarket.

Bill Piercy and Howard Davis operated their dairy business until 1974. Then, there was a gasoline shortage, and they decided to close the business. In 1974, Bill Piercy was 60, and Howard Davis was 50 when they closed the business.

Just one year later, Howard Davis died in 1975 at the age of 51. His wife, Zelma Davis, died in 2012 at the age of 82. Howard and Zelma Davis were buried in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

Bill Piercy lived in Fairbury from 1947 to 2008. Marcella Piercy died in 2009 at the age of 88. Bill Piercy died in 2010 at the age of 96. They were both interred in Bloomington's East Lawn Memorial Gardens Cemetery and Mausoleum

Sometime before he died, Bill Piercy wrote a four-page letter describing all the phases of the Piercy Sealtest Dairy. A descendant recently donated a copy of this letter to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. This letter can be viewed using this link to the museum website.

Bill Piercy and Howard Davis operated the Piercy Sealtest Dairy in Fairbury from 1947 until 1974. This business provided milk and ice cream to Fairbury residents for about 27 years.

One of the delivery trucks for Bill's Dairy in Fairbury.

Four children enjoying ice cream on a hot summer day at Bill's Dairy retail store on Second Street south of the railroad tracks.

CHAPTER 46

How the Pioneer Settlers Built Their First Log Cabin

In 1909, authors Newton Bateman and Paul Selby published a book titled ***"Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois" and "History of Livingston County, Volume II***." In this book, the authors recounted how the pioneer settlers built their first log cabin. This portion of their history book is excerpted and shown below.

When the pioneer farmer and home-seeker arrived in this county to "spy out the land" and select a place to make his future home, his first thought was to provide a shelter for his family and his team (team of horses).

He found along the streams an abundance of good hardwood timber, such as black and white walnut, white, red and burr oak, ash, elm, hickory, hackberry, wild cherry, etc., but no sawmill to convert this timber into lumber for building purposes.

The early settler, however, usually came prepared to meet just such an emergency and was equal to the occasion. A hand-ax, a broad-ax, a cross-cut saw, a hand-saw, an auger, an adze, a draw-shave, a frow, and two or three iron wedges were the tools necessary for the construction of a comfortable log cabin.

With a team and his outfit, which was sufficient for building purposes for a whole neighborhood, the pioneer farmer would begin the construction of his house and stables. Having selected the spot upon which to build his cabin, and determined the size he wished to make it, he would go into the timber and select a sufficient number of trees of the proper size, cut and with his team drag the logs to the place determined upon for the building.

When he had enough logs on the ground, he would cut them the proper length, notch the ends, and place them around the spot where the house was to stand. Then, with the assistance of a few neighbors, the logs were soon put together in the shape of a house or log cabin.

The rafters to support the roof were logs or poles, six to seven inches in diameter at the butt and laid lengthwise of the building and pinned with wooden pins to the logs forming the gable ends, thus supporting the gables in place as well as forming rafters for the clapboard roof.

The clapboards that were then in general use for making cabin roofs were made from logs cut in two and a half and three feet lengths from large straight-grained white or burr oak trees; and it required an experienced woodman to select trees that could easily be worked up into good clapboards. The logs were split into bolts with a maul and iron wedges, and with a mallet and frow soon worked up into clapboards that would make a roof as near watertight as a good shingle roof.

After the first course of clap hoards had been carefully laid, a pole was placed over the lower end of the course and securely pinned with inch wooden pins to the lower rafter supporting the clapboards. After the second course had been laid, lapping the first course eight to twelve inches, another pole was laid on immediately over the second rafter and held in place by three short sticks of wood with the lower ends resting against the first pole.

In this manner the entire roof was laid and secured in position without the use of a hammer or nail and did good without the use of a hammer or nail and did good service for many years.

The floors of these cabins were usually made of puncheons resting upon heavy sleepers made of logs, and fastened to the sleepers with wooden pins and then dressed down smooth with the adze.

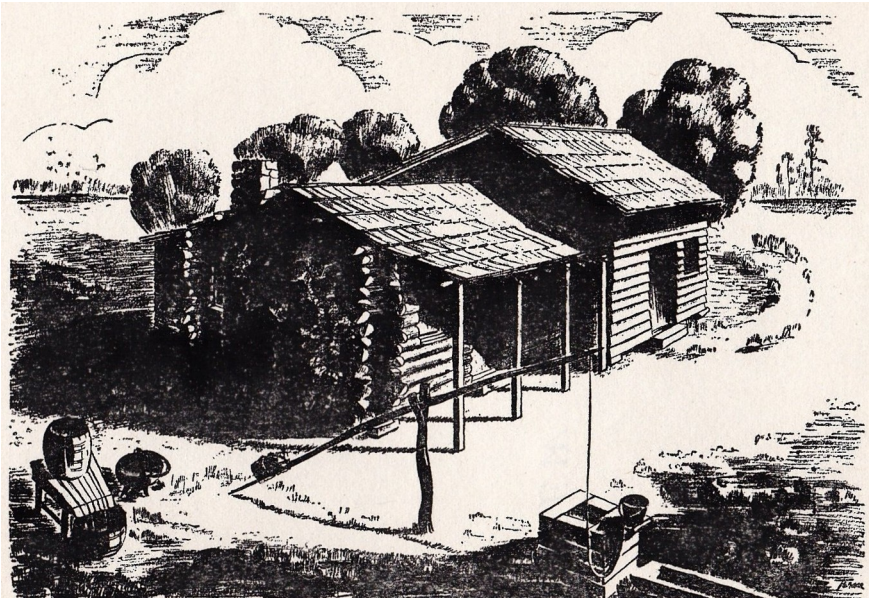
The door, window, and fireplace openings were cut out after the cabin logs were in place. The jambs were made from straight grained split timber, dressed down straight with an adze and pinned to the ends of the logs where they had been cut out. The door was made of split slabs of timber and was hung on hinges made of oak or hickory wood.

The fire-place was made large enough to take in four to six foot wood, was built of rock, with common clay for mortar, up about five or six feet high, or above the opening cut in the wall, and from there up as high as desired with split sticks about the size of lath, plastered outside and in with clay.

The sash and window glass were about the only articles in the entire building not found or made upon the land. These were usually procured in Ottawa or Peoria, and came up the river from St Louis by boat.

The writer of this sketch lived in this county during the years 1847-1848 In a double log cabin built as above described, that did not contain an ounce of hardware in its entire construction, and it was not an uncomfortable habitation.

Stables for the horses were built of logs, as were the cabins, but with roofs thatched with slough grass. This slough grass grew six to seven feet high, and made a splendid roof for stables, cribs and sheds, as well as for "topping"' off grain and hay stacks.



Francis Townsend (1866-1960) was born in his father's log cabin built northeast of Fairbury in the 1860s. Townsend is often called the "Father of the Social Security" because he created a nationwide Townsend Movement that placed political pressure to force President Roosevelt to create the Social Security system we still have today. Townsend made this sketch of his father's log cabin for his autobiography book.

CHAPTER 47

Hungarian Immigrant Became Successful Fairbury Farmer

Most people who emigrated from Europe and ended up in Fairbury were from England, Ireland, Germany, and Switzerland. The Barth family is the only family known to have emigrated from Hungary to Fairbury.

The Barth family's story began with the birth of Valentine Barth in Austria, Hungary, in 1844. That part of Europe has a fascinating history. When Valentine Barth was 23 years old, the Austria-Hungarian Empire was formed in 1867. This Empire was a combination of Austria and Hungary. A military and diplomatic alliance, it consisted of two sovereign states with a single monarch who was titled both Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary. One of Europe's major powers at the time, Austria-Hungary was geographically the second-largest country in Europe and the third-most populous (after Russia and the German Empire). This form of government continued until it was dissolved in 1918.

In 1870, Valentine Barth married Johanna Matheis. He was 25 at the time, and she was 22. Valentine and Johanna Barth had three girls and three boys. Unfortunately, all three daughters died in infancy. The names and birth years of the three sons included John Barth, born in 1875, Valentine Barth Jr., born in 1881, and Adam Barth, born in 1883.

In 1875, Valentine Barth became a member of the German Apostolic Christian Church in Hungary. In 1892, the Valentine Barth family emigrated from Hungary to Fairbury. When they emigrated, Valentine was 48, Johanna was 44, John Robert was 17, Valentine Jr. was 11, and Adam was nine.

By 1892, the Apostolic Church was well established in the Fairbury and Forrest areas. Valentine Barth may have chosen to emigrate to Fairbury because of connections to the Apostolic Church.

Benjamin Nussbaum wrote two pamphlets about the history of the Apostolic Church. In 1973, he wrote his history of the South Side, and in 1975, he wrote his history of the North Side.

In his writings, Nussbaum recounted the North Side church began with Joseph Virkler. He was both an Elder and a Minister. In 1864, he and his family moved from New York to a farm north of Forrest, Illinois. As more families arrived in the area, Virkler started conducting church services in local homes. Around 1870, a small two-room church was built on Virkler's land. The family names of some of the first members were Abersol, Honegger, Huber, Keller, Leuthold, Metz, Ramseyer, Scharlach, Stoller, and Schwartzentraub.

As more families settled in the Fairbury area, attending the church north of Forrest using horse-drawn wagons or buggies became increasingly challenging. When there were enough Fairbury members, they built their own South Side church building in 1875. Some of the family names of those early members included Bittner, Farney, Gerber, Hari, Hartman, Hosterwitz, Nussbaum, Roth, Slagle, Sohn, Sommer, Steffen, Wenger, Yoder, Ziegenhorn, and Zimmerman.

In the 1900 U.S. Census, Valentine Barth and his wife lived on Elm Street in Fairbury. He was 55, and his wife was 51. Valentine's occupation was a carpenter.

Just one year after this Census was taken, Valentine Barth was almost killed in a farm accident. In that era, loose hay had to be lifted to the top level of barns using a steel hook or harpoon stuck in the hay and attached to a rope. The rope went up to a high pulley. Men or horses pulled the rope and lifted the hay up and into the barn.

Valentine was helping to put up hay for Andrew Steffen near Cropsey. The harpoon fell and struck his breast and broke one rib. Had he been standing straight, Valentine probably would have been killed outright. Valentine likely worked as a "hired hand" for various farmers south of Fairbury.

In 1904, Adam Barth, son of Valentine and Johanna Barth, married Jennie Mowery. She was the daughter of Francis M. Mowery (1842-1927) and

Rebecca Parker (1842-1926). He was 21, and she was 20 when they married. They had three children. They lived in Fairbury.

John Barth, son of Valentine and Johanna Barth, moved to Harper, Kansas, and married Emma Rebecca Maninger. Valentine Barth, son of Valentine and Johanna Barth, married Ida Mae Fickes, and they lived in Peoria.

In the 1910 Census, Valentine and his wife lived on East Locust Street in Fairbury. He was 66, and his wife was 62. Valentine listed his occupation as a farmer. The Census also noted that Valentine was a Naturalized Citizen.

Valentine Barth died in 1916 at the age of 72 in Fairbury. He was a member of the German Apostolic Christian Church and was buried in Graceland Cemetery. When Valentine died, his son John Barth was living in Harper, Kansas. His son Valentine Barth Jr. lived in Peoria when his father died. The third son, Adam Barth, lived in Fairbury.

Seven years after her husband died, Johanna Barfth died in 1923 in Fairbury at the age of 74. She was buried alongside her husband in Graceland.

In the 1930 Fairbury phone book, son Adam Barth and his wife, Jennie, along with their children, Raymond, Hazel, and George, lived at 406 E. Maple Street, and their telephone number was listed as 246 W.

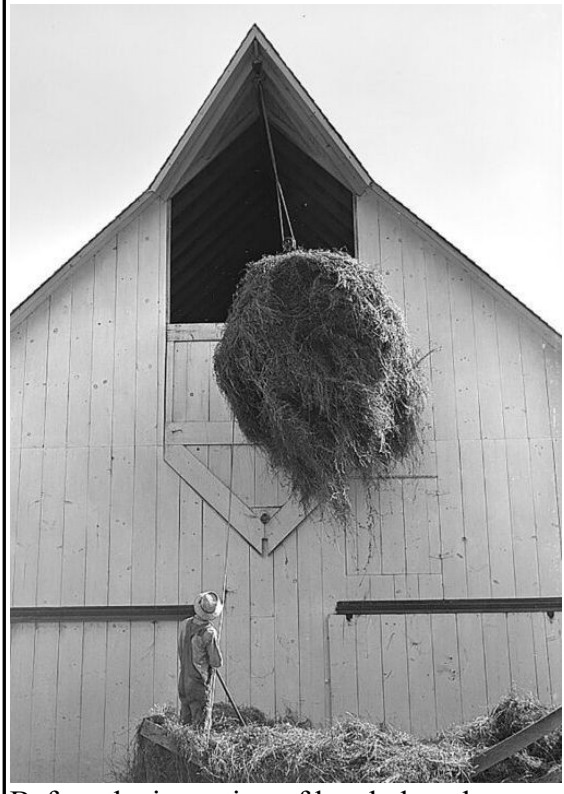
Jennie Barth, the wife of Adam Barth, died in 1956 at the age of 72. She was buried in Graceland Cemetery.

In 1964, Adam Barth was 81 years old and still working as a plasterer in Fairbury. That year, U.S. Route 24 had a detour that included a bridge one mile south and a half mile east of Fairbury. Mr. Barth hit a pothole, which caused him to hit the guard rail on the bridge.

State Trooper John Manning reported that Barth refused medical treatment and transport to a hospital. Keith Stiver took Mr. Barth home in the Stiver Funeral Home ambulance. Mr. Stiver stayed with Mr. Barth for an hour at his home, and then Keith went home. The next morning at 8:30 AM, Keith Stiver checked on Mr. Barth at his house and found him unconscious. He

was taken to the Fairbury Hospital and died in the afternoon. An autopsy revealed Mr. Barth had several injuries, including a skull fracture. Adam Barth was buried in Graceland cemetery with his wife, Jennie Barth.

Valentine Barth was an example of a man who brought his family from Hungary to the Fairbury area, and he became a successful farmer. His three sons also led productive lives in America.



Before the invention of hay balers, loose hay had to be lifted up and into the barn. A steel harpoon was used to grab the loose hay and it was hooked to a rope that lifted the hay up and into the barn.

CHAPTER 48

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad

Livingston County was created in 1837. It was one of the last parts of Illinois to be settled and farmed because it was swampland, and there were no railroads to import needed supplies or export farm products.

These two problems were solved by railroads built in the 1850s and drainage of the swampland by orange clay field tile in the 1880s. Fortunately, the 1878 Livingston County history book by LeBaron recounts the construction and routes of the first railroads built in Livingston County.

The first railroad in Livingston County was the Chicago & Mississippi Railroad, running from Joliet to Alton. It was built in 1853 and 1854. A few years later, it was purchased by T. B. Blackstone and renamed the Chicago & Alton Railroad. Initially, the stations on the main line were Dwight, Odell, Cayuga, Pontiac, and Ocoya.

In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. The villages of Fairbury and Chatsworth were created on the new railroad. This railroad was later renamed the TP&W (Toledo, Peoria, and Warsaw Railroad).

In 1865, Mr. Samuel L. Fleming of Pontiac, an investor in early railroads, got the Illinois legislature to approve a charter for a new railroad from Ottawa to Fairbury. Initially, it was named the Fairbury, Pontiac & Northwestern Railroad. This name was later changed to the Chicago & Paducah Railroad. Eventually, the name was again changed to the Wabash Railroad.

The charter investors were S. C. Ladd, B. P. Babcock, Samuel L. Fleming, Nelson Buck, Jonathan Duff, William Strawn, R. B. Harrington, S. C. Crane, John Dehner, Walter Cornell, M. E. Collins, Ralph Plumb, Enoch Lundy, David McIntosh, H. L. Marsh, W. G. McDowell, J. W. Strevell, I. B. Tyler, and William B. Lyon.

These charter investors were businessmen and lawyers of that era. Ladd Street in Pontiac is named after S. C. Ladd. Nelson Buck was a surveyor who was murdered in Nebraska by the Sioux in 1869, along with several young men from Pontiac. John Dehner's brick house still stands in Pontiac and is now called the Jones House. Henry Marsh discovered coal in Fairbury, and Marsh Park is named after him. Judge W. G. McDowell's house still stands in Fairbury, and he founded McDowell, Illinois, and Fairbury, Nebraska. Abraham Lincoln spent an afternoon and evening at the home of J. W. Strevell, and this house is now called the Strevell House in Pontiac.

In 1867, the charter for this new railroad was amended so it might run anywhere northerly and southerly of Pontiac, that point being retained. A company was formed in 1869 with M. E. Collins as President and S. S. Lawrence as Secretary.

Bonds were issued by the Livingston County townships of Indian Grove, Avoca, Eppard's Point, Owego, Pontiac, Amity, and Newton to pay for the railroad construction. The Fairbury, Pontiac & Northwestern Company contracted with Colonel Ralph Plumb of Streator, Colonel W. H. W. Cushman of Ottawa, and David Strawn to build and equip the new railroad.

All the bonds were transferred, and stock was also issued to them, so the railroad became theirs after construction. The contract to build the railroad stipulated that the new railroad would never be transferred to the Chicago & Alton Railroad, with the intent of the new railroad always competing with the existing Chicago & Alton.

In 1872, the new Chicago & Paducah Railroad started track construction in Streator and ran southeast through Livingston County. It then ran through Ford, Champaign, Piatt, Moultrie, Shelby, and Effingham Counties to Altamont. The stations in Livingston County included Newtown, Cornell, Rowe, Pontiac, McDowell, Lodemia, Fairbury, Murphy's Station, and Strawn.

At Streator, the Chicago & Paducah connected with the Ottawa branch of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad. It initially had 41 miles of track in Livingston County.

A few years after the Chicago & Paducah Railroad was built through Livingston County, the track connecting Fairbury to Strawn was removed. The Fairbury to Strawn line was no longer needed because other railroads ran south of Forrest. The track at Fairbury was connected to the TP&W line. The point where the Chicago & Paducah Railroad turned south from Fairbury towards Strawn remains a historical mystery. After 150 years, no traces of this Fairbury to Strawn branch can be found.

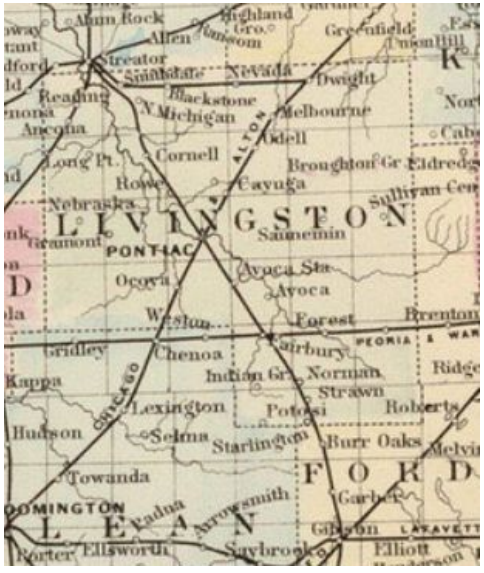
The Chicago & Paducah Railroad started in Streator and ran south into Pontiac. The 1923 Sanborn Insurance map of Pontiac shows the Chicago & Paducah (renamed to the Wabash on the map) railroad coming from the north into Pontiac around the intersection of Aurora and Indiana Streets. It went southerly through Pontiac and left Pontiac on a bridge (which no longer exists) across the Vermilion River just east of what is now Chautauqua Park. One photo does exist showing the bridge over the Vermilion River by Chautauqua Park.

This railroad then proceeded in a southeastern direction to McDowell, Lodemia, Champlin, and the northwest corner of Fairbury. The Chicago & Paducah came into Fairbury on the northwest side of town, crossed the TP&W tracks, and then ran parallel to the TP&W. There was a depot on the west side of Fairbury. Only one poor-quality photo still exists that shows this long-gone depot.

After the Chicago & Paducah came into Fairbury, the tracks ran parallel and just south of the TP&W tracks. What is now Walnut Street was called Paducah Avenue long ago.

In the 1970s, the tracks from Pontiac to Fairbury were in poor condition, and the trains had to travel at slow speeds. This railroad ran until the late 1970s when the tracks were removed from Pontiac to Fairbury. The outline of this track can be seen where it intersected roads going in an east-west direction.

The Chicago & Paducah Railroad, later renamed the Wabash, operated in Livingston County for approximately 100 years. It allowed farmers between Pontiac and Fairbury to export their grain products to many different markets in the United States.



1880 railroad map of Illinois showing the Chicago & Paducah Railroad running south from Streator to Pontiac, Fairbury, and Gibson City.

CHAPTER 49

Website is a Treasure-Trove of Fairbury History

The Fairbury Echoes Museum maintains a website called FairburyEchoes.org. This website is an invaluable resource for anyone researching Fairbury or family history.

Under the website's Resource Tab, a list of 14 different resources is available to researchers. Many of the rare or unusual Fairbury-related documents in the museum's archives have been scanned and uploaded to the Internet Archive (Archive.org). This website is a huge non-profit that allows people to upload rare documents for free. Once the documents are uploaded, they can be easily found by conducting a Google search. There is a link to browse through all 320 documents stored on this website easily.

Another resource is a series of 42 short audio recordings about various Fairbury history topics. Between 2016 and 2019, Fairbury Historian Dale C. Maley recorded these sessions for the WJEZ radio station that used to be in Pontiac, Illinois.

The Fairbury Blade newspaper archives are another invaluable resource when researching local history. As this newspaper was published, copies of each edition were bound into large books. The Blade graciously donated these books to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. The old Blades can be electronically searched from the Dominy Library's website.

Did you know that Bobby Hankins recorded a song about Fairbury, Illinois, in 1975? You can listen to the song and read the lyrics on the website.

The Livingston County Historical Society presents information about local history at its meetings. The Fairbury Echoes museum website provides links to all presentations related to Fairbury's history.

One primary resource for researching local history is the four old history books about Livingston County published in 1878, 1888, 1900, and 1909.

The website provides links to download these books in PDF format, allowing users to perform a word search.

Fairbury has two buildings on the National Register of Historic Places: the old City Hall and the Beach House on East Hickory Street. Jack Tollensdorf conducted the historical research necessary to have these two buildings listed on the National Register in 1996. The website provides links to the applications, along with Jack's historical information.

The website also has a listing and short description of the 25 local history books researched and written by Dale C. Maley. Copies of these history books can be borrowed from the Dominy Library or purchased at Fairbury Furniture in the Walton Building or from Amazon.com.

Fairbury native Bill Goold has recently released two unpublished manuscripts about Fairbury area history. One manuscript is about the Underground Railroad, and the other is about the Kickapoo Native Americans who once lived in the area south of Fairbury. Both can be accessed using links on the website.

Another valuable resource is the negatives from the Pantagraph newspaper. These old photos can be accessed using a link on the website. There are now 1,061 negatives released about Fairbury. You can also use links to find negatives related to Cropsey and other nearby towns.

Alma Lewis James (1899-1979) was a Fairbury historian. Her most famous book was titled Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars. New copies of her book can still be purchased from the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

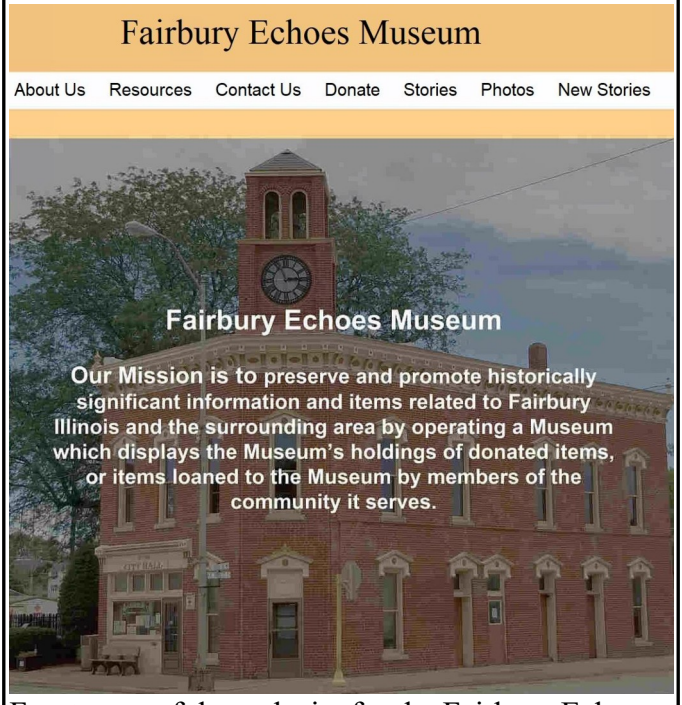
About twenty YouTube videos pertain to Fairbury history. The website has links to watch these videos. The oldest videos were created by Watt Nakamaru (1923-2008), a Fairbury photographer. These circa 1960 videos have scenes from Honeggers, the Fairbury golf course, the swimming pool, and a homecoming parade.

Besides the Resources Tab, the other tab on the website, which can be very valuable for historical research, is the Stories Tab. There are links to many stories about Fairbury's History. Some of the major story categories include school history, Native American history, public parks, businesses,

African American history, Cropsey history, Fairbury hospitals history, and biographies.

If you have old documents that you would like to donate to the Fairbury Echoes Museum for digitization and public sharing, please send an email using the link on our website. The Fairbury Echoes Museum is open from 1:00 to 4:00 PM on Thursdays and Fridays, and from 9:00 to 11:00 AM on Saturdays.

If you are researching Fairbury or performing family genealogical research, check out the Fairbury Echoes Museum website. It can be a very valuable resource for your research project.


Fairbury Echoes Museum
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Fairbury Echoes Museum
Our Mission is to preserve and promote historically significant information and items related to Fairbury Illinois and the surrounding area by operating a Museum which displays the Museum's holdings of donated items, or items loaned to the Museum by members of the community it serves.
Front page of the web site for the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

CHAPTER 50

1913 Seth Thomas Clock Still Ticking on old City Hall

The clock tower on Old City Hall in Fairbury has a fascinating history, which dates back over 130 years.

In the 1870s and 1880s, Fairbury experienced a long-standing feud between the West Enders and the East Enders. Early businesspeople wanted the business district in Fairbury to be located either on the West or East end of the village. As part of the feud, rival factions burned down buildings, resulting in many massive fires in this period.

In 1892, the village decided to build a City Hall at the southeast corner of Third and Locust Street. The city fathers insisted that the new structure be constructed of brick so that it would not suffer the same fate as many of the wood-framed buildings that were lost to the fires.

In 1996, Jack Tollensdorf researched the history of City Hall and submitted the application for it to be added to the National Register of Historic Places. In this application, Jack recounted that the building housed the Fire Department on the first floor as well as offices for city officials. Steel jail cells (which still exist today) were added to the southwest corner of the first story. The second story was designed to house City Council meetings and can only be accessed through a door on Third Street. There is no internal stairway connecting the first and second stories.

The initial building design featured a large clock that faced northwest, towards the Walton Bros. Department Store located on the northwest corner of Third and Locust Streets. This clock was

located on the roof of the building, and a photograph still exists today of this configuration.

Isaac and his brother, John Walton, had the largest and most successful store in Fairbury during that era. Both Isaac and John Walton often donated some of their money to improve Fairbury. According to an August 7, 1902, Woodford County Journal article, Isaac Walton donated $1,000 to establish an industrial arts department in the city schools. His donation of $1,000 back in 1902 would be equivalent to $36,817 in today's dollars. Isaac also bequeathed another $1,000 for the same purpose when he died in 1913.

Lorenzo Beach Dominy was a wealthy banker and was the Mayor of Fairbury. Lorenzo and his wife Phoebe were devastated when their youngest daughter, Hazel, died quickly of typhoid fever just two months before her seventeenth birthday. They decided to build a library in Fairbury in Hazel's memory at the southeast corner of Third and Walnut streets.

Just one year after daughter Hazel's death, Lorenzo Dominy died in 1902. He died before the construction of the new library was started. Phoebe Dominy was in mourning for the loss of her daughter, Hazel, and her husband, Lorenzo Dominy.

Shortly after Lorenzo Dominy's death, his wife heard that Isaac and John Walton were planning to build a new library in Fairbury. Phoebe Dominy accelerated her plans, and the Dominy Memorial Library was finished on June 12, 1905.

In early 1912, Isaac and John Walton decided to donate the funds necessary to build a four-sided clock tower, which would replace the simple clock on the roof. The clock mechanism was purchased from the Seth Thomas Clock Co. in Thomaston, Connecticut. The clock made by Seth Thomas for Fairbury had a serial number of 1768 and was completed at their Connecticut factory on August 30, 1912.

In 1913, the main clock assembly was installed in the clock tower. In 1954, the City of Fairbury spent $188 to relocate the main clock assembly from inside the tower to the second floor of the building. The fee of $188 back in 1954 would be equivalent to $2,232 in today's dollars. The 1954 restoration work was performed by Wallace Jaka, grandson of the clock's original maker.

The clock mechanism measures approximately three feet in width, two feet in depth, and four feet in height. The frame is painted green, and the mechanism sits on four legs. The clock is located on the north side of the second story of Old City Hall, and cables connect it to operate the four dials located in the clock tower.

In 1961, the clock quit operating. The City of Fairbury spent $586 to have the hands replaced, the gears repaired or replaced, and the entire assembly synchronized. This repair amount of $586 in 1961 would be equivalent to $6,255 in today's dollars.

In 2003, after 90 years of service, the Seth Thomas clock quit running again. A city-wide fundraising effort successfully raised the $10,000 needed to repair the clock. The restoration began in February and was completed in June of 2005. The mechanism was cleaned and repaired, the wooden hands were replaced with aluminum ones, and the four faces were given new glass covers. The clock tower itself was also restored. This $10,000 repair done in 2005 would be equivalent to $16,396 in today's dollars. The dedication of the refurbished clock was done during the 2005 Christmas Parade.

According to City of Fairbury Street Superintendent Lonnie Rhoads, the old clock still requires regular maintenance. Once a year, city personnel lubricate all the gears and moving elements of the clock. Twice a year, city personnel must change the time for Daylight Saving Time. Every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, the weights that ring the bell must be repositioned.

Fairbury citizens are fond of seeing the old clock faces and hearing the bell ringing. Many citizens who grew up in Fairbury recall that when they were children and the bells rang, they were expected to return home to either eat their evening meal or go to bed.

Seth Thomas clock sitting on the second floor of Old City Hall.

Nameplate of Seth Thomas clock made on August 30, 1912, in Thomaston, Connecticut.

CHAPTER 51

Civil War Soldier with Fairbury Connections

James Thompson Ayers farmed near Lexington, and he owned five lots in Fairbury. He wrote poetry to help recruit formerly enslaved Black people into the Union Army during the Civil War. He also wrote poems as prayers for his daughter's health in Fairbury after she had a complicated childbirth.

James T. Ayers was born in Kentucky in 1805. At an early age, his parents moved the family to Madison County, Ohio. His parents were Richard Ayers (1778-1844) and Nancy Ann Thompson (1781-1867).

In 1825, at the age of 20, James T. Ayers married Rebecca Bloomer. She was 19 when they married. They were married in Ohio and went on to have 11 children. In 1831, the family emigrated to Tazewell County, then to McLean County near Lexington. He was a lay Methodist minister and a strong advocate against slavery.

Unfortunately, James T. Ayers' first wife passed away in 1948 at the age of 40. He became a widower at the age of 42, and he had many young children to raise by himself. In 1858, he married Mrs. Mary J. Watson, a widow.

On April 12, 1861, Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter in South Carolina's Charleston Harbor, starting the Civil War. The Civil War provided an opportunity for James T. Ayers to crusade against the abuses of slavery. Mr. Ayers found himself too old to join the Army. For over a year, he watched younger men enlist and march away to crush people whom he believed to be traitors.

In August of 1862, the Illinois 129th Infantry unit was formed in Livingston County. All the members of Company E were from Fairbury. Colonel A. J. Cropsey (who Cropsey Township and the village of Cropsey were named after) was the leader of Company E.

Fifty-seven-year-old James T. Ayers traveled the short distance from Lexington to Pontiac. He lied and said he was only 50 years old and that

he lived in Fairbury, not Lexington in McLean County. Mr. Ayers was accepted as a Private in Company E of the 129th Infantry. Mr. Ayers enlisted for three years.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that all persons held as slaves in the rebellious states were, and henceforward, shall be free. Within a few months, the Union Army started recruiting formerly enslaved black people to join the Union Army.

In the summer of 1863, James T. Ayers began recruiting black soldiers under a special assignment in Tennessee under the direction of Governor Johnson. He recruited more than 100 men. On Christmas Day of 1863, James T. Ayers was sent to Stevenson, Alabama, to work under the direction of Captain William F. Wheeler as a recruiter.
As soon as he began this formal recruiting assignment in December 1863, James T. Ayers started writing a diary of his activities. He maintained this diary until his death in September of 1865.

In 1947, the Illinois State Historical Society published his diary in a book. The book's title is ***Civil War Diary of James T. Ayers: Civil War Recruiter.*** One of the reasons the Illinois State Historical Society published his diary was that it was one of the rare references to how the Union recruited black men to join the Union Army.

On April 12, 1864, Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest and his 2,000 troops launched an attack against the 600 Union soldiers at Fort Pillow on the Mississippi River about 40 miles north of Memphis. About half of the Union soldiers were black.

The Confederate troops were able to capture the fort with ease against the vastly outnumbered Union forces. This Confederate victory quickly became nationally known as the Fort Pillow Massacre. One version of events recounted that many of the black Union soldiers tried to surrender, but the Confederate forces massacred them. The Confederate forces were not happy to see their former slaves fighting against them in battle, so they massacred them.

This Fort Pillow Massacre story quickly spread to all the blacks living in the southern states. James T. Ayers realized that if he wrote a poem about the Fort Pillow Massacre, the poem could be used to recruit new black soldiers who could seek vengeance against the Confederate forces who committed the atrocity at Fort Pillow. Copies of his poems still exist today.

The recruitment effort to enlist more black soldiers was somewhat disorganized, and some Union officers resisted the idea of blacks fighting in combat. James T. Ayers was 58 years old, and he grew disillusioned with the recruiting program. He longed to return to his old Fairbury Company E unit and resigned as a recruiter in October of 1864.

Then, too, by the early autumn of 1864, the time had come for the re-election of Abraham Lincoln as President. This election interested Ayers more than anything else. He devoted his spare moments to writing campaign poetry and songs. He recorded in his diary that Lincoln's defeat would be a national calamity. He also complained about his poor health in his diary entries.

On November 10, 1864, he obtained a 20-day furlough from Chattanooga, Tennessee, and went to Fairbury, Illinois. James T. Ayers was not feeling well and needed some rest. He decided to stay at his daughter's house in Fairbury. He also planned to visit his son Joseph, who lived in Danvers. James T. Ayers recorded his visit to Fairbury in his diary, which was published in 1947.

His daughter, Sarah E. Ayers (1846-1880), married John Warrick (1846-1871), and they lived in Fairbury. Two days after he arrived in Fairbury at his daughter's house, his new granddaughter Harriet Lynch Warrick was born. Unfortunately, it was a complicated birth, and his daughter was very ill for several weeks after the birth.

While he was in Fairbury, Abraham Lincoln got elected to his second term as President, which made James T. Ayers very happy. Mr. Ayers sold five lots that he owned in Fairbury to Judge Woodford G. McDowell for $60 each. Mr. Ayers was also able to visit his son, Joseph, in western McLean County.

James T. Ayers wrote a poem as a prayer for his very sick daughter to recover from childbirth. The health of both James T. Ayers and his daughter, Sarah, improved, and he returned to the Civil War with his old Fairbury 129th Company E unit.

Sarah Elizabeth Ayers survived the birth of Harriet, her daughter. Sarah's husband, John Warrick, died August 6, 1871. She then married Nathan Hinshaw. Sarah died May 22, 1880, in Anchor, Illinois. Granddaughter Harriet Lynch Warrick died in 1937 in Michigan.

The military career of James Ayers did not terminate with the Civil War. He had learned to like Army life. Furthermore, he was intensely interested in the future welfare of African Americans. Ayers felt that he could assist in the difficult task of adjusting these people to their new freedom.

Before he was mustered out of his old Fairbury 129th Infantry Company E unit, he enlisted on June 5, 1865, as chaplain with the 104th Regiment of the United States Colored Troops. He was assigned to Company G and ordered to report at Fort Duane at Beaufort, South Carolina, on July 1, 1865. Ayers received his commission as a first lieutenant.

James T. Ayers ranked fifth on the roster of officers in the Regiment, with only a colonel, a lieutenant colonel, a major, and a surgeon above him. Ayers's ill health prevented him from giving much service to the 104th Regiment. During the summer of 1865, he was committed to the hospital at Beaufort, South Carolina, where he died of typhus on September 10, 1865. James T. Ayers was 59 years old when he died.

The legacy of James T. Ayers endures because of the diary that he kept during the Civil War. His diary remains a valuable firsthand account of the challenges and triumphs of Union recruiting efforts among the newly freed population.

Sketch of James T. Ayers in the Civil War by Fairbury soldier James H. Phillips in the 129th Illinois Infantry Company E. Mr. Ayers lied about his age when he enlisted saying he was 50 years old when he really was 57.

Load up your guns My brave old Chums
We'll Charge there Ranks once more
Fort Pillow, Oh the murdered groans
We will avenge your gore
Come my brave boys
Load up your guns
Gird on your glittering steel,
And if we overtake the hounds
Fort Pillow they shall feel.
Charge boys Charge, Clean out their Ranks
Give them your Cold steel
From Center to Extended flank
Make them Fort Pillow feel.

Poem written by James T. Ayers used to recruit new African American soldiers for the Union Army who wanted to seek vengeance for the Fort Pillow Massacre. He was one of about 200 Union Army recruiters who were successful in recruiting about 180,000 black soldiers for the Union Army.

CHAPTER 52

Salt was Gold to Early Settlers

Today, we often overlook the challenges our ancestors faced before the advent of refrigeration, which made it difficult to keep meat from spoiling. From the time the Pilgrims first landed in 1620 until about the 1860s, when ice started to be used to preserve meat, salt was the primary method of meat preservation. Ice was used from the 1860s until the 1950s, when most Americans began purchasing refrigerators that employed mechanical refrigeration to preserve meat.

In the 1800s, there were at least three different methods of preserving meat using salt. The first method involved rubbing the exterior of the meat with salt and letting it sit. The salt drew the moisture out of the meat, preventing it from decaying. The salted meat was then smoked, allowing it to be stored for six to 12 months before consumption.

The second method involved soaking the meat in a salty brine, allowing the salt to draw the water out of the meat. Then it was smoked and stored. The third method involved packing the meat in layers of salt between the meat and storing it. No smoking was required.

The oceans contain approximately 3.5 percent salt. Native Americans made bowls from clay and allowed the seawater to evaporate, yielding salt. The early settlers on the East Coast of the United States boiled seawater to extract the salt from the oceans.

Millions of years ago, parts of the United States, including Illinois, were covered by oceans. These oceans deposited salt, which later became underground salt deposits. Sometimes, a natural spring would dissolve some of this salt, forming salty springs on the surface. For example, French Lick, Indiana, had springs that emitted salty water and other dissolved minerals. The salt concentration at French Lick was too low to allow for the economic boiling of water and the extraction of salt.

Salt springs with a high enough salt concentration to boil the water and yield salt were discovered by Native Americans in southeastern Illinois,

near Shawneetown and Equality. This area is now commonly referred to as the Saline Salt Works. The Native Americans used clay bowls to let the salty water evaporate and yield salt crystals. The spring water at the Saline Salt Works contained between 0.8 and 1.8% salt, or an average of about 1.3% salt (about a third of the salt water concentration in the oceans).

Around 1735, French settlers learned about the Saline Salt Works from the Native Americans and began extracting and boiling the spring water to make salt crystals. In 1763, control of the salt springs passed to the British after the French and Indian War. In 1803, the U.S. Government made a treaty with the Native Americans and took over control of the Saline Salt Works.

In the early 1800s, the Saline Salt Works required 125 to 280 gallons of brine to produce a single bushel (50 pounds) of salt. Large quantities of wood were needed to fuel the fires used for boiling and evaporating the brine into salt crystals. It required a relatively large amount of human labor to cut the firewood and boil the water.

Before the adoption of the first Illinois State Constitution in 1818, enslaved African Americans were used to operate the Saline Salt Works. Many early settlers in Southern Illinois came from slave-owning states, and they favored the continuation of slavery in the Constitution. As a political compromise to get the first Constitution approved in 1818, a special exemption was made to allow the continuation of slavery at the Saline Salt Works for seven more years after the Constitution was approved.

During the first few years that Illinois was a state, the Saline Salt Works generated 33% of the state's revenue. This high dependence on the Saline Salt Works for state income gradually declined as more settlers moved to Illinois.

All the trees within a couple of miles of the Saline Salt Works were cut down for firewood to boil the saltwater. Operators of the salt works began to pump the salt brine from the salt springs over two miles to where there were more trees for firewood. The salt brine was boiled next to the trees. The pipe was made of trees that had a center hole drilled using a drill

powered by a water wheel. Some remnants of this wooden pipe still exist today.

The State of Illinois leased the salt works to private individuals for the production of salt. As the 1825 deadline approached for ending slavery at the Saline Salt Works, the owners forced the enslaved people to sign indentured servitude agreements. These long-term agreements essentially continued slavery at the Saline Salt Works until it closed in 1871 with the death of the principal operator.

John Hart Crenshaw was the principal operator of the salt works near Equality, Illinois, who died in 1871. Crenshaw was infamous for practicing the Reverse Underground Railroad—the kidnapping and illegal sale of free Black individuals from free states into slavery in the South. Despite Illinois being a free state, Crenshaw leased and later owned salt works where the use of enslaved labor was permitted, and he became notorious for his role in kidnapping and slave trading. Crenshaw died on December 4, 1871, and is buried in Hickory Hill Cemetery near Equality, Illinois.

West Virginia also had salt springs with a relatively high concentration of salt. These springs eventually replaced the production of salt at the Saline Salt Works.

Originally, Congress deeded control of the salt land to Illinois at statehood in 1818, forbidding its sale but allowing leasing. After salt production ended and the economics changed, Congress eventually authorized the state to sell the land outright.

Today, the Illinois Salines site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is managed as an archaeological and historic site by state agencies. The Crenshaw House (also known as the Old Slave House), located nearby and associated with the salt works, is owned by the State of Illinois. The state purchased the house and surrounding acreage in 2000.

The Crenshaw House (also known as the Old Slave House) near Equality, Illinois, is currently closed to the public and not open for visits or tours. The State of Illinois purchased the property and 10 surrounding acres in 2000. The house has remained shuttered due to the high estimated cost—

around $7 million—needed for renovations, repairs, road and parking improvements, and other infrastructure to reopen it as a museum or historic site safely.

The first settlers in Livingston County were Valentine and Rachel Darnall, who settled on Indian Creek south of Fairbury in 1830. In 1832, the McDowells settled north of Fairbury, and Franklin Oliver settled three miles south of Chatsworth in Oliver's Grove. All of these early settlers needed salt to preserve their meat, and this salt came from the Saline Salt Works.

These early Livingston County settlers were likely aware of the Saline Salt Works in southern Illinois. They probably did not know the salt was manufactured using formerly enslaved Black people who had been forced into indentured servitude.

The Crenshaw House still stands near Equality, Illinois. The State of Illinois purchased the historic home in 2000, but it has not been restored and is closed to the public because the State can not afford the $7 million required to rebuild the site.

CHAPTER 53

Additional History Mysteries

Every town has its share of unsolved historical mysteries, and Fairbury has its fair share of mysteries still waiting to be solved.

One of the most intriguing mysteries is whether a Native American woman who survived the Trail of Tears forced march is buried in the Spence Cemetery south of Fairbury.

Wikipedia defines the "Trail of Tears" as an ethnic cleansing and forced displacement of approximately 60,000 people of the "Five Civilized Tribes" between 1830 and 1850 by the United States government. As part of the Indian removal, members of the Cherokee, Muscogee (Creek), Seminole, Chickasaw, and Choctaw nations were forcibly removed from their ancestral homelands in the Southeastern United States to newly designated Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River after the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830. The Cherokee removal in 1838 (the last forced removal east of the Mississippi) was brought on by the discovery of gold near Dahlonega, Georgia, in 1828, resulting in the Georgia Gold Rush.

James Spence (1797-1881) and his wife Susannah Spence (1803-1879) are buried in Spence Cemetery, south of Fairbury. Susannah was part Native American. Her mother, who was a full-blooded Native American, may also be buried in an unmarked grave in Spence Cemetery. Her mother, Elizabeth Pridmore Aquatake Quatie Rishton, walked and survived the "Trail of Tears."

At this time, no documentation supports whether or not Elizabeth Pridmore Aquatake Quatie Rishton was buried in the Spence Cemetery. It is possible that the older woman came to live with her daughter south of Fairbury and was then buried in an unmarked grave in this cemetery.

Another mystery is the origin and demise of a ghost town named Cassville somewhere between Fairbury and Pontiac. An 1847 map of the state of Illinois shows a dirt road running from Middleport to Pontiac. Fairbury is

not shown on this map because it was not founded until 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad ran its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border.

Middleport, in that era, was the county seat of Iroquois County. In 1865, the name of Middleport was changed to Watseka in honor of the wife of a Potawatomi Chief. Livingston County was established in 1837, with Pontiac serving as its county seat. In 1847, this dirt road connected the two county-seat villages.

According to Wikipedia, Lewis Cass (1782-1866) was a United States Army officer and politician. He represented Michigan in the United States Senate and served in the Cabinets of two U.S. Presidents, Andrew Jackson and James Buchanan. He was also the 1848 Democratic presidential nominee. A slave owner himself, he was a leading spokesman for the doctrine of popular sovereignty, which at the time held the idea that people in each U.S. state should have the right to decide whether to permit slavery as a matter of states' rights. Lewis Cass lost the 1848 presidential election to Zachary Taylor.

An early settler likely attempted to create a new village, which he named Cassville in honor of Lewis Cass. Like many small villages, Cassville probably became a ghost town when a railroad was not built through it. Except for the 1847 Illinois map, the town of Cassville has very few references in published historical documents.

Another mystery surrounds what happened to the missing years of the large bound paper Blade newspaper books. The Fairbury Blade newspaper used to save one copy of each issue and then had someone bind them up into large bound volumes. Typically, each book contained one year's worth of the Blade. The Blade staff used to refer to these books to look up historical information or to create the Looking Back section of the paper.

The Blade also sent a copy of every issue to the University of Illinois, where they were scanned onto microfilm. The Dominy Memorial Library then got a copy of these microfilm rolls for public use. A few years ago, these microfilm rolls were sent to an outside firm, which scanned them to make the newspaper available online through the library's website. Unfortunately, not all of the images or old photos scanned well for the

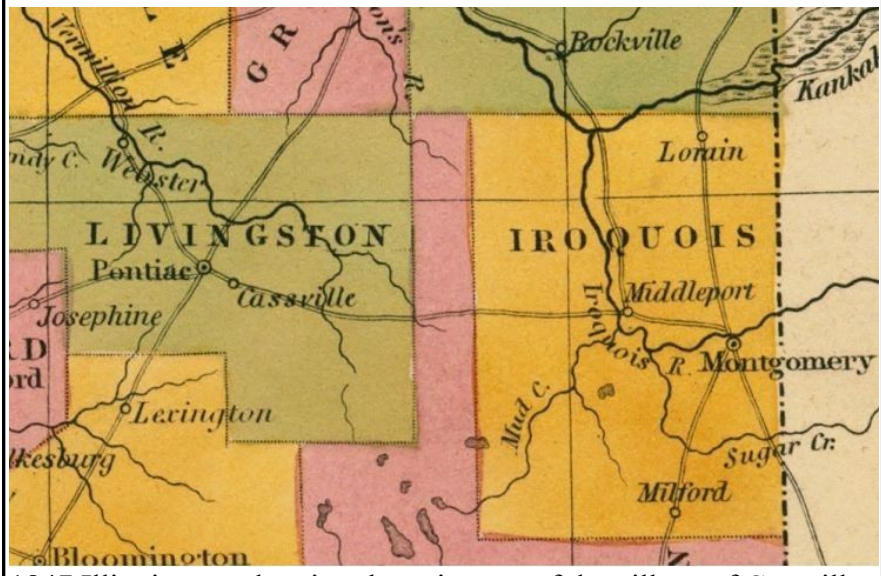
microfilm, and therefore, they are not legible in the online version. The old Blade books still feature good photos, and museum staff can use a digital camera to capture these images.

Before the Blade quit publication, they graciously donated all the large bound volumes of the Blade to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. All of these books are preserved in the archives of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Unfortunately, twelve years of the big books could not be found when they were donated to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. The missing years are 1880, 1882, 1886, 1888, 1896, 1904, 1908, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1918, and 1955.

These large books were relocated around Fairbury a couple of times over the years as the Blade changed locations between the east and west ends of Locust Street, between Second and Third Streets. They were all stored in the basement of the Fairbury Paint Store, which was just east of the Bank of Pontiac, during one of these moves. If anyone knows the location of any of these missing books, please contact the Fairbury Echoes Museum at 692-2191.

Another fascinating mystery dates back over 100 years. Fairbury made the national newspapers in January of 1917. Two citizens of Fairbury, Stephen Young and Sophia Lancaster, died in the same week. Each of these Fairbury citizens was purported to be 117 years old. Both of these individuals were African Americans who were formerly enslaved. They were each buried in the oldest section of Graceland Cemetery, located on South Seventh Street.

Statistically, it is unlikely that either of these two Fairbury residents was 117 years of age in 1917. Each of them reported differing dates of birth in the U.S. Census over the years. No records can currently be found that pinpoint the absolute ages of these Fairbury citizens. Perhaps someday, some records will be found that validate their actual ages.



1847 Illinois map showing the existence of the village of Cassville somewhere between Middleport (now Watseka) and Pontiac. In that era, Pontiac was the county seat of Livingston County and Middleport was the country seat of Iroquois County. This dirt road connected the two county seats.

CHAPTER 54

Fairbury's Second Murder in 1898

Over Fairbury's 168-year existence, a total of eight murders were committed. The first murder case was that of Ida Mae Steers in 1896.
She was seventeen years old and was murdered by twenty-six-year-old Charles Burrell. Mr. Burrell was the hired farm hand for the Bert Steers family south of Fairbury. During March and April of 1896, he attempted to court the seventeen-year-old Ida Mae Steers.

Ida Mae Steers broke off the relationship, and Mr. Burrell decided that if she would not be his girlfriend, he would murder her. Mr. Burrell shot Ida Mae Steers, and she died a couple of weeks before her eighteenth birthday.
Just two years after Mr. Burrell murdered Ida Mae Steers, another murder occurred, which also involved romantic relationships in 1898. The story of the second murder in Fairbury's history began with the birth of Earl Hanna in 1875. He was a young man with a strong and active frame and undoubted physical courage.

The fact that Earl's father, Zachariah, was a Fairbury Constable did not keep his son from having trouble with the law. When Earl was nineteen years old, he was arrested for stealing chickens from Mr. William Shedd in Weston. For this crime, he served a year in the Reform School at Pontiac.
After Earl served his time in the Reform School, he was not considered a vicious character and was not in the habit of carrying weapons. After his father's death, he became a paper hanger and contributed his earnings liberally to the support of his mother and family. Earl was direct and reliable in business matters. Although he was not a young man with spotless morals, he was not at all a dangerous or desperate character.

Joseph Ellis was born in 1874. Both of his parents were from Germany. Ellis came to Fairbury from Pontiac in 1898. He had relatives in both Fairbury and Pontiac. The family had lived in the county for many years. He worked in Ellis' saloon for some time. He was rather tall and rawboned, with black hair and eyes. He was in the habit of carrying arms but did not have a desperate reputation.

Winnie (Winnifred) Rogers came from one of the pioneering families of Fairbury on the Straight side of her family. She was born in 1875 and also grew up in Fairbury. Her parents were Samuel S. Rogers and Caroline Straight.

Winnie's half-sister, Mary Esther Mattoon, married prominent Cairo, Illinois, attorney William Nicholas Butler. W. N. Butler went on to become a State's Attorney and, eventually, a Judge in Cairo, Illinois.
In early 1898, Winnie Rogers was dating Earl Hanna. Winnie and Earl were both twenty-three years old. She was very enamored with him. At some point, Earl lost interest in Winnie and started to date another girl. Winnie desperately wanted to continue her relationship with Earl and wrote him letters describing her affection towards him. Earl sometimes did not answer her messages. Other times, Earl did not reply civilly to Winnie's letters.

Winnie decided to make Earl Hanna jealous by dating another boy. She started to date twenty-four-year-old Joe Ellis. This situation created issues between Earl Hanna and Joe Ellis. Then Winnie got into a physical fight with Earl Hanna's new girlfriend. After the fight started, Earl Hanna convinced Joe Ellis to stay out of it and let the girls fight it out.
After this fight was over, Winnie Rogers wrote a letter to Earl Hanna. In this letter, Winnie said that she had told Joe Ellis that Earl had called Joe a coward. Winnie warned Earl Hanna that "every dog has its day." At this point, Joe Ellis had apparently made up his mind to shoot Earl Hanna the next time they met.

On Tuesday evening, April 6, 1898, Winnie and Earl Hanna went for a walk along Hickory Street. They left Winnie's home around 8 PM. Joe Ellis and his friend Louis Gagnon were also taking a walk in Fairbury. The two parties met on the north side of Hickory Street, between Fifth and Sixth Streets.

Joe Ellis then asked Earl Hanna why he held such a big grudge against him. Earl told Joe that he knew full well why he had the grudge. Joe Ellis then pulled a gun and demanded that Earl Hanna get down on his knees and apologize to Winnie. Earl told Joe Ellis that he was crazy, and he would not get down on his knees. Joe Ellis then fired his gun at Earl

Hanna. The bullet entered Earl's body about two inches to the left of the lower extremity of the breast bone.

Joe Ellis then told Earl that if that bullet did not fix him, he would fire another shot into him. Winnie then pleaded with Joe Ellis not to shoot again. Earl Hanna staggered back and told the group he was dying. Winnie then cried out, "You got just what you deserve. I am glad of it."

Louis Gagnon helped the wounded Earl Hanna walk to the residence of Marion Babb, and Dr. Otis was summoned. Earl lived through the night but died at 5:20 AM the next morning.

Ellis and Miss Rogers went to the residence of her foster parents across the street from where Hanna lay. Ellis went from there to his uncle's saloon uptown and afterwards returned to the Rogers residence. After a time, Winnie came over to Babb's and asked about Hanna's condition. Winnie said at the inquest that this was not because she cared anything about it but because Ellis wanted to know.

Gertrude Hassenfratz was a seventeen-year-old girl who lived close to Winnie Rogers. On the night of the shooting, Gertrude was also taking a walk on Hickory Street with a friend. She encountered Winnie and Joe Ellis together. Winnie told her they were looking for Earl Hanna and that Joe was going to shoot him. The evidence of Miss Hassenfratz created a great sensation because it appeared to implicate Miss Rogers in the crime.

Joe Ellis fled Fairbury. Warrants were issued for both Joe Ellis and Winnie Rogers. Miss Rogers was arrested at her home by Constable Joe Galloway. Eventually, she was granted bail. No record of any trial for her can be found.

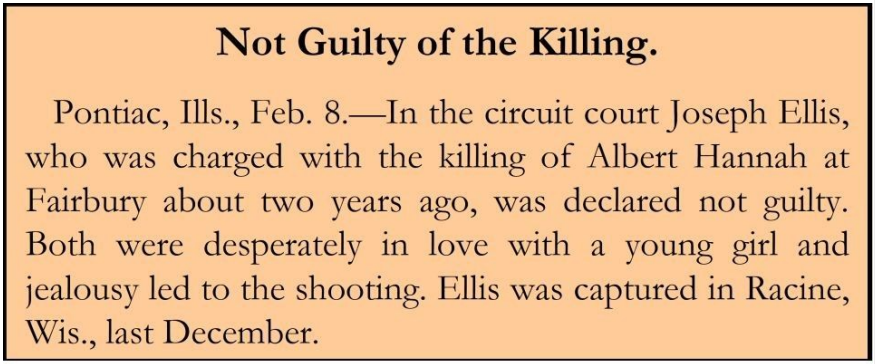
Thirty-three months after the shooting, Joe Ellis was apprehended in Racine, Wisconsin. He was returned to Pontiac for trial. By that time, Winnie Rogers had married Francis J. Carbine of Michigan.

Winnie's family enlisted the help of W. N. Butler, husband of Winnie's half-sister, Mary Esther Mattoon. Mr. Butler put Joe Ellis on the witness stand. Joe swore that he was afraid of Hanna and that the night of the shooting, Hanna had a revolver.

It was the universal opinion that Ellis would have been found guilty but for a letter introduced by the defense. Hanna wrote this letter to Winifred Rogers in which he threatened the life of Ellis. W. N. Butler of Cairo read the letter, and it was the turning point in favor of the defendant. Up to this time, it looked as though he would receive a sentence. Joe Ellis was found not guilty of murdering Earl Hanna.

Slain Earl Hanna was buried with his parents in Fairbury's cemetery. Their graves are located in the northwest portion of the cemetery.

This second murder was a case of romantic relationships between three young people that evolved into a significant tragedy in Fairbury's history.



Not Guilty of the Killing.

Pontiac, Ills., Feb. 8.—In the circuit court Joseph Ellis, who was charged with the killing of Albert Hannah at Fairbury about two years ago, was declared not guilty. Both were desperately in love with a young girl and jealousy led to the shooting. Ellis was captured in Racine, Wis., last December.

Article in the February 8, 1901, edition of the Rock Island Argus newspaper reported that Joe Ellis was found not guilty in his murder trial held in Pontiac, Illinois.

CHAPTER 55

Corn Harvesting in the 1840s

Many Fairbury area residents grew up on farms in the 1950s or 1960s. In that era, corn yields were about 100 bushels per acre. Corn was often harvested using a 2-row corn picker, which placed the ears of corn into wagons pulled behind the tractor with the corn picker.

The eared corn was transported from the field by tractors pulling the wagons to the corn crib location. The eared corn was emptied from the wagon by tipping up the wagon or using hydraulics to lift the wagon bed with corn. The eared corn fell into an elevator, which transported the ears up and into the top of the corn crib. The elevator was often powered by using the PTO (Power Take-Off) shaft from a tractor or by a separate internal combustion engine.

The wooden corn crib had air gaps between the siding boards, allowing air to circulate through the ears of corn. The corn would dry in the crib, which prevented it from spoiling. Eventually, a sheller machine came to the farm, which converted the eared corn into kernels and separated the corn cobs. The kernels of corn would be transported by a wagon or truck to a local elevator and sold.

The first white settlers in Livingston County were Valentine and Rachel Darnall. They settled on what is now Indian Creek about six miles south of Fairbury in 1830. Between 1830 and about 1853, there were very few settlers living in Livingston County. Due to a federal law granting free land to war veterans, a surge of settlers arrived in Livingston County between approximately 1853 and 1860. By the start of the Civil War, all the land in the county had been claimed by settlers.

It is interesting to research and discover how the early settlers in the 1830s and 1840s harvested their corn. These early settlers relied solely on horses as their primary power source. There were no tractors with internal combustion engines and no electricity.

The early pioneer settlers typically farmed only about 80 acres, as farming was extremely labor-intensive in that era. It was not until 1917 that the average farm size in Livingston County increased to 160 acres.

In the 1840s, if a farmer wanted to sell some of his corn, he had to take a horse-drawn wagon of corn 60 miles from the Fairbury area to Green's Mill north of Ottawa. The other option was to travel the 100 miles to the then small town of Chicago. It wasn't easy to sell grain until the railroad came through Fairbury in 1857.

Until the farmland in the Fairbury area was tiled and drained in the 1880s, most of the farmland was very swampy and often flooded. Farmers in the 1840s era were lucky to average a yield of about 30 bushels per acre of corn.

Farmers in the Fairbury area in the 1840s often grew both corn and oats. The corn was then ground into cornmeal or sold. The oats were frequently used to feed their horses. Formal crop rotation plans were not adopted until after the 1880s.

Eared corn was harvested by hand in the fields. The farmer and his children would pick the corn from the stalk and throw it into a horse-drawn wagon. The boards on one side of the wagon were higher than those on the other side, allowing corn to be thrown against the higher board and rebound, then fall into the wagon. The higher sideboards were commonly referred to as "bang boards."

Once the wagon was full of eared corn, a horse would pull the wagon from the field to the corn crib, usually located in the vicinity of the farmer's log cabin or house. Since no power sources were available in the 1840s, the farmer would typically stand in the wagon with the corn, then use a shovel to throw the corn ears up and into an opening in the top of the corn crib.

These early corn cribs were only about ten feet tall. The distance from the ground to the bed of the wagon was about three feet, and the farmer was about five feet seven inches tall. Using a corn shovel, the farmer could throw the eared corn about ten feet high.

There are almost no corn cribs left today from the 1840s. It takes 2.5 cubic feet to hold one bushel of eared corn. A corn crib 10 feet wide, 10 feet high, and 30 feet long will hold 1200 bushels of eared corn.

If the typical 1840s farm was 80 acres, and half of it was planted in corn with a yield of 30 bushels per acre, the farmer would harvest a total of 1,200 bushels of corn.

The earliest corn cribs were likely smaller, rectangular-shaped buildings about 10 feet high. If more storage capacity was needed, a second side was often added, leaving room between them to store a horse and a wagon.

In the 1840s, there was no such thing as hybrid corn seed. Each year, the farmer had to save one bushel of corn for every eight acres he planned to plant in corn the following year. If the farmer wanted to plant 80 acres in corn the following year, he had to keep and store 10 bushels of corn until planting time in the Spring.

Photography did not become widely used until the 1860s, during the Civil War. No photographs of 1840s corn cribs are known to exist today. An AI (Artificial Intelligence) computer program was used to generate an image of an 1840s farmer standing in a wagon of eared corn and shoveling the corn into a corn crib.

Farming in the 1840s was a very labor-intensive operation. Each ear of corn had to be removed by hand from a corn stalk and then thrown into a horse-drawn wagon. Then the farmer had to throw every ear of corn from the wagon into a ten-foot-tall corn crib using a scoop shovel. As farming continued to evolve with the advent of mechanization and high-yielding hybrid seeds, the amount of labor required dramatically declined.

Because photography was not in common use until the Civil War, there are no known photographs of an 1840s farmer scooping eared corn from a horse-drawn wagon into a ten foot tall corn crib. The AI (Artificial Intelligence) program Perplexity was used to generate this image of a farmer scooping his eared corn into his corn crib.

CHAPTER 56

The Missing Cropsey Couple in 1923

One of the most scandalous stories in the history of Cropsey was the disappearance of a married woman and a divorced World War I veteran back in 1923. The married woman was Sybil Knight, a country school teacher from Colfax, who was married to Belle Prairie farmer Lon Tarr. The divorced World War I veteran was Cloyd Button.

The family story of Lon Tarr began with his grandfather, Aaron Becker. Before the Civil War, Aaron Becker was a prominent farmer in Belle Prairie Township south of Fairbury. When the Civil War started, it was an acceptable practice to pay a substitute to take your place as a soldier in the Union Army. In the 1888 Livingston County history book, it was noted that Aaron Becker, of Belle Prairie Township, paid $1,000 in 1863 to a substitute for taking his place in the Union Army. That amount would be equivalent to $25,924 in today's dollars. The replacement did not receive their fee until their stint of military service had been completed.

One of the daughters of Aaron Becker was Sarah Ann Becker (1864-1955). Sarah married William A. Tarr, and they farmed in Belle Prairie Township. William and Sarah Tarr had three children. Daughter Estella Mae Tarr was born in 1886. Son Delford A. Tarr was born in 1887. Their other son, Leone, "Lon" Tarr, was born in 1896.

The family story of the married school teacher who ran away with the divorced man began with the birth of Sybil Beatrice Knight in 1896 in Colfax. She graduated with the Class of 1914 in Colfax. Sybil married Lon Tarr in 1917 in Champaign when she was 21 years old. Lon Tarr farmed in Belle Prairie Township, and Sybil taught country school at Potosi. The Potosi country school was located between Fairbury and Cropsey.

In 1923, Sybil had been married for six years, and she was 27 years of age. Lon and Sybil Tarr had no children. In April of 1923, Lon drove his wife, Sybil, to Bloomington and left her at the County School Superintendent's office. When he went back to pick her up, she could not be found. Lon checked several places in Bloomington, but could not find her. Lon finally

drove home to their farm in Belle Prairie Township without her.

That same day, Cloyd B. Button and his automobile went missing from Cropsey. Cloyd was drafted into WWI. Just before Cloyd was sent overseas, he married a girl in New York. After the war was over, Cloyd's wife returned to her native home in New York, and divorce proceedings had been started.

On April 20, 1923, the Blade published a story titled "Cropsey People Disappear." The article recounted that local opinion was that Mrs. Tarr and Cloyd Button had left together. Sybil had made no mention to her students that she might be leaving. A substitute teacher, Clarence Blundy, was found to take the place of the missing Mrs. Tarr at the Potosi school.

Fourteen days after the Cropsey couple went missing, they were found together near Flint, Michigan. Mrs. Tarr was returned to her parents in Colfax. Cloyd Button was arrested and charged with violating the Mann Act. The judge ordered a bond of $1,000 for Mr. Button. Cloyd asked his Cropsey friends to pay the bond, but they refused. Since Cloyd had no money, he was detained in the McLean County Jail. The bond of $1,000 in 1923 would be equivalent to $18,760 in today's dollars.

The Mann Act was named after the Congressman who sponsored the bill, James Robert Mann of Illinois. In its original form, the law made it a felony to engage in interstate or foreign commerce transport of "any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose." Its primary stated intent was to address prostitution, immorality, and human trafficking, particularly where trafficking was for the purposes of prostitution.

The Mann Act was one of several acts of protective legislation aimed at moral reform during the Progressive Era. In practice, its ambiguous language about "immorality" resulted in it being used to criminalize even consensual sexual behavior between adults. It was amended by Congress in 1978 and again in 1986 to limit its application to transport for the purpose of prostitution or other illegal sexual acts.

Cloyd Button, the World War I veteran, was eventually transferred from the McLean County Jail to the Sangamon County Jail in Springfield. A

grand jury in Springfield reviewed the charge against Mr. Button of violating the Mann Act. The grand jury voted not to indict Cloyd for violating the Mann Act. Mr. Button was released from jail on June 8, 1923. No record could be found regarding Mr. Button's activities after he was released from the county jail.

Lon Tarr and Sybil Knight got a divorce. She moved to the Indianapolis, Indiana, area and took a job as a stenographer. Sybil then got a job as the private secretary to the matron of the women's state prison in Indianapolis. Her co-workers reported that Sybil was an accurate, neat, and dependable worker.

In late November of 1926, three years after she went missing, Sybil underwent an operation for appendicitis at St. Vincent's Hospital. She was unable to recover from this operation and died in the hospital. Sybil was only 30 years old when she died. The funeral was held in Colfax, and she was buried in a local cemetery.

Lon Tarr learned the embalmer trade. Mr. Tarr was a funeral director and embalmer with the Flynn Funeral Home in Bloomington and the Oxmann Funeral Home in Hammond, Indiana. In 1941, at the age of 46, Lon Tarr married Lorine Snodsmith. Lon and Lorine had no children. Lon Tarr died in 1961 at the age of 65.

The specific details of the relationship between Cloyd Button and Mrs. Tarr will likely never be known. The parents of Sybil Knight, or her husband, could have insisted that authorities charge Cloyd with violating the Mann Act. It is unlikely that there was any evidence that Cloyd forced Mrs. Tarr to go with him, given the grand jury's refusal to indict him for violating the Mann Act. There is no evidence that Cloyd Button joined Sybil Knight after she moved to Indiana. Unfortunately, we may never know what became of Cloyd Button after he was released from the Sangamon County Jail.

CAPTURE CROPSEY COUPLE

Cloyd Button and Mrs. Leon Tarr, who disappeared from the vicinity of Cropsey about three weeks ago, were arrested in a town near Flint, Michigan, last Friday, and Button now reposes in the McLean County jail at Bloomington, while Mrs. Tarr is with her parents at Colfax.

When arrested Button was without funds. He tried to get Cropsey parties to go his bond of a thousand dollars, but up to the present time he has been unsuccessful.

—Fairbury Blade

CHAPTER 57

Paint Technology Has Changed with the Times

The earliest widely accepted evidence of humans using paint dates to about 51,200 years ago, in the Leang Kpuang limestone cave, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. These cave paintings depict wild pigs and human-like figures painted with natural mineral pigments.

Many dictionaries define paint as a colored substance that is spread over a surface and dries to leave a thin decorative or protective coating. Paint recipes always include three different types of ingredients.

The first ingredient in paint is a pigment that gives the paint its color. The earliest pigments were naturally occurring rocks that were crushed into powders. Other natural substances used for early pigments included minerals and plants. The pigment is the primary visual element in paint.

The pigments can not be applied in powder form. The powder requires a binder to hold it together while the paint is being applied. The second key ingredient for paint is the binder. This material binds the pigments together while they are applied. Historically, binders have included animal fat, egg, milk proteins, oils, gums, and resins.

The third key ingredient in paint is a solvent or thinner. It dissolves or suspends the binder with the pigments. They allow the adjustment of the paint thickness for application, and they aid in the paint drying. Water is often used for water-based paints, and turpentine or mineral spirits for oil-based paints. In early paints, sometimes the binder and the solvent were the same material.

The Indonesian cave paintings, featuring red-colored wild pigs and humans, utilized the red ochre found in the region as their pigment. They ground the material into a powder and mixed it with natural materials like animal fat or plant sap as the binder. The binder materials were also the solvent ingredient in their paint. They likely applied this paint using their fingers or brushes made from animal hair or plant fibers. These bright red cave paintings have lasted for more than 50,000 years.

The first settlers in Livingston County were Valentine and Rachel Darnall. They settled on what is now Indian Creek about seven miles south of Fairbury. All of the early settlers first built a log cabin because there were no sawmills available to make boards. As sawmills became available, these early settlers often built a new wood-framed house with wood siding. These early settlers did not worry about painting their log cabins or early framed houses.

In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana, and Fairbury was founded. Once the railroad was in place, materials for making paint could be brought in using rail cars and then sold in early Fairbury stores.

By the 1860s, some farmers built wood-framed barns with wood siding. To keep their barns from rotting in the weather, they would paint them red. A farmer would start the paint preparation process by collecting rust (iron oxide) from rusty farm equipment or nails. This pigment colored the paint a deep red and acted as a fungicide to protect the wood from rotting.

The binder and solvent for this red barn paint was linseed oil, which came from flax seeds. The linseed oil could be brought in by the railroad and sold in Fairbury stores. Sometimes milk and lime were added to improve the paint's durability and for quicker drying.

The mixture was stirred up and then brushed on thickly, soaking through the rough wood. This early paint mixture gave the barn a deep red color. The paint was made in small batches and had to be shaken up often to keep the pigments in solution.

By the 1870s, there were quite a few wood-frame houses in Fairbury with wood siding. Commercially made premixed paint was not yet available in that era. Homeowners had to buy the ingredients and mix up their own paint in batches. The color choices were somewhat limited and included white or several earth-tone colors like brown, red, mustard, and green. The exterior of most houses was painted in a two-color scheme, with the siding being one color and the trim a different color. The historic Strevell House in Pontiac, built in 1857, was found to have the original paint scheme of red on the wood siding with white trim.

For these 1870s paints, the pigment was white lead for a white color and natural minerals such as ochre, sienna, and umber for the colored paints. The pigments were ground into a fine powder using a stone muller. The binder was linseed oil, and sometimes turpentine was added as a solvent.

When freshly applied, white lead paint appeared clean, bright, and durable-a true white not achievable by umber or earth pigments. In the 1870s, the adverse health effects of lead were not yet known. White lead paint was the most popular paint for houses until safer alternatives replaced it.

The first U.S. patent for "ready-mixed" paint was granted in Ohio in 1867. Re-sealable metal paint cans were invented in 1877. By the 1880s, ready-mixed paint was manufactured on an industrial scale and distributed to paint stores across the United States. Homeowners in Fairbury could purchase national brands of premixed paints in cans, and they moved away from hand-mixing pigments and oils on-site. This transformation meant Fairbury homeowners had access to a broader range of colors, higher consistency, and greater convenience when painting their homes.

Starting in the 1880s, white exterior house paint was made in factories using white lead as the pigment, linseed oil as the binder, and turpentine or mineral spirits as the solvent.

By the 1920s, the hazards of using white lead as a pigment were starting to be recognized. Zinc oxide began to replace white lead in exterior white paints. By the 1950s, alkyd resins (synthetic oil-based binders) replaced natural oils, making paints more weather-resistant and easier to use.

By the 1970s, latex water-based paints were introduced as an option for oil-based paints. Latex offered several benefits, including low odors, quick drying, easier cleanup, and reduced toxicity.

A VOC is a volatile organic compound-an organic chemical that evaporates and enters the air at room temperature, commonly found in many paints. VOCs are used in paint as solvents to help with application and drying. VOCs are considered harmful because they can contribute to

indoor air pollution and cause health problems such as headaches, dizziness, and even long-term impacts like respiratory issues or cancer.

Modern paints are formulated to have low-VOC or zero-VOC levels to reduce emissions and exposure, which is especially important for indoor air quality. Starting in the 1980s, the trend has continued with the development of low and zero-VOC paints for improved health and environmental safety.

Fortunately, Fairbury residents no longer have to obtain all the ingredients required to mix up small batches of paint for their barns or houses. Consumers can visit a store, purchase high-quality, factory-made premixed paint, take it home, and immediately apply it to their project.

White lead was used to make paint long ago in Fairbury. Jack Tollensdorf operated the Fairbury Paint Store just east of the Bank of Pontiac. John Tollensdorf remembers that his father kept some white lead cans and then used them to make a historical display in the store.

A painter in the 1870s mixing up his own paint.

CHAPTER 58

Life Before the Railroads

It is interesting to speculate on what typical life was like in the Fairbury area before the railroads came to the area. The first settlers in Livingston County were Valentine and Rachel Darnall, who settled about 7 miles south of Fairbury on what is now Indian Creek in 1830.

In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. The village of Fairbury was created on this new railroad. This railroad was later renamed the TP&W (Toledo, Peoria, and Warsaw Railroad).

So our ancestors lived about 27 years in this area before the first railroad came through. In the 1830s, everyone assumed the best spot to build a log cabin was on a creek or a river. In the Fairbury area, this was on Indian Creek or the Vermilion River. A check of every early settler in Avoca, Indian Grove, and Belle Prairie townships found that 100 percent of the early settlers first settled on these waterways.

The average American house built today has over 100,000 parts or components. Each of these components is readily available at a local lumberyard or a big box store like Lowe's, Menards, or Home Depot.

The early settlers in our area had zero access to building components, nails, planed boards, hardware, or glass for windows. Because of this, these pioneer settlers brought the critical tools they needed to build a log cabin with them. These tools included a hand-ax, broad-ax, cross-cut saw, hand saw, auger or drill, adze, draw shave, froe, and two or three iron wedges to split logs. A horse team was also needed to drag logs to the log cabin building site.

The McDowells were one of the first pioneer settlers in the area, and they built their log cabin on the South Fork of the Vermilion River north of Fairbury. They brought some panes of glass with them when they first arrived, but they had no planed boards for the window frames. Per the 1878 Livingston County history book, the boards which furnished the

material for the door and window casing of this primitive dwelling were purchased from the Kickapoo Indians and were brought from Oliver's Grove with an ox team. The Indians had hewn them out for some purpose of their own, but were induced to part with them for a small supply of ammunition.

Once the log cabin was built to provide shelter for the pioneer family, the next immediate need was for food and water. They got their water for drinking, cooking, and bathing from the nearby creek or river.

The pioneer settlers also had to be completely self-reliant with respect to their food supply since there were no grocery stores. These early settlers brought some seeds with them to plant their first garden. They often also brought some animals with them, including chickens, hogs, goats, and cows. The chickens provided both eggs and meat.

Fish could be found in the nearby creek or river. The early settlers were blessed to have an abundant amount of wild game available for a meat supply. These animals included deer, wild turkey, pigeons, opossums, ducks, geese, and quail. The deer often traveled in herds of more than 100 animals.

John Johnson was another pioneer settler who came to Rook's Creek, just west of Pontiac, in the 1830s. In the Fall of 1834, John Johnson and his sons killed 75 deer. They transported the deer skins and hams by wagon to Ottawa, where they sold them for $65. This amount is equivalent to $2,015 in today's dollars.

The pioneer settlers had no refrigerators or freezers to preserve their meat. They relied on rubbing the meat with salt or packing it in salt. Salt preserved the meat by absorbing its water, preventing bacteria from growing. All of the salt in that era in Illinois was produced at the Saline Salt Works near Equality, Illinois, in southeastern Illinois. The early settlers likely purchased this salt in Ottawa or Chicago when they took their grain and livestock to these trading centers.

In the 1847 to 1857 era, before the railroads, pioneer settlers in the Fairbury area likely saw Mr. Newman and his peddling wagon once a

month. In exchange for his goods, Mr. Newman accepted deer skins, mink skins, ginseng root, feathers, and many other articles.

The farming practices of the pioneer settlers were utterly different from today's large farms. Pioneer farmers needed a way to mill their grain into flour, which could be used to make bread-related food products for the family to consume. The three choices these early farmers had to mill their grain were to take their grain to be milled in Chicago, Ottawa, or Peoria. Since the farmers often had to wait a day or two to get their wagon of grain milled, they did some store trading near the mills and likely bought salt and cloth to make clothing.

Each spring, early farmers needed seed corn to plant the following year's crop. Corn yields in the 1830s and 1840s were about 30 bushels to the acre. These pioneer farmers had to save one bushel of seed corn for every eight acres to be planted the following year.

Farming was a very tough occupation for the early settlers. The land was swampy, and crops often flooded out. There was no easy way to obtain the necessary input supplies for farming, and no convenient method of selling farm outputs for cash. Farming was also very physically demanding. These pioneer farm families often had large families so that children could help with the farming.

The nearest post office was in Bloomington. In 1838, a Post Office was established in Avoca Township in one of the McDowell houses. Indian Grove got a post office in a house in 1846.

Children had very few toys to play with. The father would often whittle or carve simple toys from wood. The mother usually made corn husk dolls for her girls to play with.

Because the land around Fairbury was swampy, mosquitoes were very prevalent, and they spread malaria to the pioneer settlers. There were very few physicians in the entire county, and they had no effective drugs to administer to treat diseases. Their chief "stock in trade" consisted of quinine, calomel, castor oil, laudanum, and camphor dissolved in alcohol.

It is estimated that half the children born in Illinois in pioneer days died before reaching five years of age, usually from digestive disorders. A forty-year-old man or woman was considered old.

So in summary, life before the railroads was a very challenging life. Pioneer families had to be very self-reliant because they had few neighbors to help. The arrival of the railroads in the 1850s changed everything. With the railroads, the farmers had a way to get the inputs needed to grow their crops and raise livestock. They also had an easy way to sell their farm products to remote city markets.

It is extremely difficult for us to imagine the lifestyle before the railroads, as most of us grew up with stores where we can buy almost anything we need, well-trained doctors with effective drugs and well-equipped hospitals, and well-trained teachers with well-equipped classrooms. We also live with all the other modern conveniences the pioneers did not have, including refrigerators, electricity, and automobiles.

A mother in the 1850s making a corn husk doll for her daughter. Image generated by the Perplexity AI (Artificial Intelligence) software.

CHAPTER 59

History of Various Siding Types Used on Fairbury Homes

The various types of materials used for the exterior of houses in the Fairbury area have evolved significantly since Valentine and Rachel Darnall built their first log cabin south of Fairbury in 1830. Pioneer settlers used logs from timber growing along Indian Creek or the Vermilion River to build their log cabins.

The Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border in 1857, marking the founding of the village of Fairbury. Once the railroads were in place, house-building materials could be brought to Fairbury and sold through local lumberyards.

Between the Darnalls settling in 1830 and the first railroad in 1857, sawmills were installed in the Fairbury area at some point. The sawmills were either water-powered or horse-powered. The most common design for horses powering sawmills was known as "sweep power" or "horse wheel," where one or more horses walked in a circular path, turning a central shaft that provided rotary power to the sawmill.

Once sawmills could make wooden boards, pioneer settlers quickly replaced their log cabins with wood-framed houses. Sawmills quickly developed that could saw logs at a taper, creating horizontal, tapered clapboard siding. This early clapboard was about five inches tall, with the bottom of the board being about three-quarters of an inch thick and the top about a quarter inch thick.

Both the historic 1854 Strevell House and the 1858 Jones House in Pontiac used beveled wood siding for their exterior. Many of the siding boards on the Strevell House are still the original 1854 boards, with some being replaced over the years. The bottom row of siding boards tends to rot because rainwater bounces back up from the ground, exposing them to more moisture. Recent replacement of these rotted boards used new cedar beveled siding boards purchased from Menard's Special Orders system. The new boards are dimensionally identical to the original 1854 boards.

Another option in this era was to nail boards vertically to the frame and butt the boards together. These boards were cut from local trees, and early sawmills produced them up to 12 inches wide and one inch thick. The cracks between the boards were filled with chinking materials. The pioneer settlers borrowed the approach they had used in constructing their log cabins, where mud, straw, and sometimes animal hair were used to fill the log joints.

With the advent of more economical lumber after the railroad arrived in 1857, the vertical board approach was modified to become the board-and-batten siding method. A narrower board was nailed over each of the vertical joints to seal the structure much better than the chinking method. This method revealed a visual pattern of repeating batten boards when viewed from the exterior. The board and batten method was used to build many outlying buildings on Fairbury area farms.

Log cabins and then framed houses used cedar shingles made of wood until asphalt shingles replaced them in the 1910s and 1920s. A few homes in the Fairbury area likely used cedar shingles as a vertical siding method on their framed homes.

One potential problem with using wood-based siding on a wood-framed house is the risk of the house burning down, as wood is a highly combustible material. Some early commercial buildings in Fairbury utilized locally made bricks to minimize the risk of fire. After the railroad came through in 1857, bricks for building houses could have been transported by the railroad. The Thomas A. Beach House, located on East Hickory Street, is a brick home built in 1872. Those bricks were likely brought to Fairbury by the railroad. This house is often referred to as the "Lion House" due to the two concrete lions located in the front yard. Brick exterior walls have been used for dwellings up to the present day. The initial cost to build brick houses is higher than that of other exterior siding materials.

From 1857 until the 1930s, most homes in the Fairbury area were predominantly wood beveled siding, with the remainder being brick. In the 1930s, asphalt shingles, similar to roofing shingles, were used on exterior vertical walls of some Fairbury homes. Before it was remodeled, the house

at the northeast corner of First and Hickory Streets had light brown-colored asphalt shingles as its exterior siding.

After World War II ended, there was a tremendous need to build more residential housing and to build it as quickly as possible. Carl Strandlund conceived the idea of addressing the housing shortage by manufacturing low-cost homes that utilized steel panels with a porcelain coating. He applied for and received a patent for his concept. He named his new houses Lustron homes.

Around 1947, two Lustron homes were built in Fairbury. One still stands and is on Hickory Street just east of the Beach House. The other Lustron home was constructed at 409 West Pine Street. This home on Pine Street no longer stands because a couple of years ago, it was carefully dismantled, and the parts were saved by someone who restores Lustron homes. Because the price of these homes was significantly higher than that of conventional "stick-built" wood-frame homes, the company quickly went out of business.

Aluminum siding was first introduced as a residential exterior siding method after World War II. Aluminum reduced the need to repaint wood siding every 10 years to keep it from rotting. After many years, the paint on aluminum siding often fades, but it can be repainted successfully. Aluminum siding was vulnerable to permanent denting, such as from a hail storm. Many houses were built in Fairbury in this era with aluminum siding.

Starting in the early 1970s, grooved plywood became very popular for exterior siding on new houses built in Fairbury. Lumberyards referred to this material as T1-11 plywood siding. It has grooves every four or eight inches and has a rough texture. It gained popularity due to its rustic appearance, affordability, and ease of installation. Many existing homes in Fairbury have this grooved siding, and as long as it is periodically repainted, it will last for many decades. The North Park screened-in pavilion, finished in 1998, utilized T1-11 siding. The Marsh Park screened-in pavilion, completed in 2017, also features T1-11 plywood siding.

Also during the 1970s, vinyl siding was introduced and began to be used in the construction of new Fairbury homes. Vinyl siding has also been used to replace or cover beveled wood siding on older homes. It is very economical and easy to install. It does not require periodic repainting.

Some homes built in the last 20 years use a combination of stacked rock and vinyl siding to give a pleasing architectural exterior view of the home. Many also use a combination of brick and vinyl siding to achieve a visually appealing appearance. During the last couple of decades, other exterior siding options, including fiber cement, engineered wood, and metal siding, have become available for residential construction. These newer options have not been widely adopted in the construction of new Fairbury homes.

Since Valentine and Rachel Darnall first settled south of Fairbury in their log cabin in 1830, there has been a gradual trend away from local materials, such as wood, to man-made materials, including vinyl siding and factory-made bricks. The factors of initial cost, maintenance costs, and longevity drove these changes. We may see more changes in the materials used for external residential siding in the coming decades.

A typical 1970s home using a combination of brick and T1-11 plywood grooved siding. Many homes in Fairbury were built in the 1970s using the T1-11 plywood siding.

CHAPTER 60

Knoll Lodge Still Going Strong after 106 Years

Knoll Lodge is a social group that meets every Thursday night at their cabin on the Vermilion River, about five miles north of Fairbury. A meal is prepared for the group by a designated member.

The history of this group traces back to the first organization meeting held on April 15, 1919. Mr. J. C. Kessler was appointed as the temporary chairman, and A. D. Cooley was appointed as the temporary secretary.

The group needed a place to hold their meetings. Mr. Cooley had spoken with Walter Tavener, and Mr. Tavener agreed to let the group use an old camping site on his timberland. A committee of five men was appointed to investigate the plans and costs of building a cabin for the group to hold their cook-outs and meetings. The committee consisted of Charles Schnetzler, A. B. Claudon, E. B. Ramsey, A. D. Cooley, and Owen Bailey.

At this first organizational meeting, the list of the twenty charter members of the group was read. The group decided to limit total membership to these 20 charter members. A second committee of five members was appointed to study the location of the new facility and a lease for the facility. This committee consisted of Dr. Dan Brewer, Hugh Pence, Charles Schnetzler, F. M. McDowell, and A. D. Cooley as chairman.

A third committee was established to draw up the first Constitution and bylaws for the group. The chairman of this third committee was Elmer Ramsey. Committee members were Charles Gregg, Newton Fulton, G. B. Spence, and Henry Nussbaum.

A fourth committee was established to determine the equipment needed for the new facility. Mr. J. C. Kessler was chairman, and the members were A. D. Cooley, Frank Shaw, N. W. Hanson, and Jack Fugate.

The last item on the agenda for this first meeting of Knoll Lodge was the establishment of annual dues. The annual dues were set at $25 per year. This amount would be equivalent to $463 in today's dollars. Most of these

charter members were local businessmen or medical doctors. The members at this first organizational meeting included J. C. Kessler, Hugh Pence, F. M. McDowell, Jack Fugate, Dr. Dan Brewer, Elmer Ramsey, Charles Gregg, N. W. Hanson, A. D. Cooley, Owen Bailey, William Morris, Ed Kessler, and Charles Schnetzler.

The first Knoll Lodge cabin was constructed next to the Vermilion River, and a meeting was held on June 23, 1919, to approve the construction bills. A dedication ceremony was then held on June 27, 1919, for the new meeting place.

At about the same time, the first Constitution was written and approved by the club members. This Constitution included four house and ground rules. The first of these rules stated that from midnight on Sunday to 8 PM on Tuesday nights, the ladies of the members may enjoy the privileges and advantages of the club when accompanied by a member or members of Knoll Lodge. Another rule stated that any member preparing meals at the lodge must wash and tidy the kitchen utensils, sweep the floor, and put everything away after the meal, ensuring the area was left in better condition than when the meal was prepared.

By 1950, Ada Chesebro (1895-1987) had acquired the land on which the lodge was built. She increased the lease cost to $100 per year. This annual lease amount would be equivalent to $1,327 in today's dollars. Also in 1950, an electric generator was purchased from Harley Honegger for $275 to provide electricity to the cabin. This purchase amount would be equivalent to $3,650 in today's dollars.

Two years later, in 1952, the Vermilion River, adjacent to the Knoll Lodge cabin, was dredged to enhance the water flow downstream. In 1953, the idea was adopted for each member to act as the chairman for one meal during the year.

In 1957, the lodge members voted to have electricity run from First Street down the lane to the cabin. In 1962, new kitchen counters and cupboards were installed. A new gas stove was installed in 1966. Knoll Lodge celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 1969.

In 1977, the limit on the number of members was increased from 25 to 30. Four years later, in 1981, Dean Moser and Lyle Honegger built a new steak grille with an overhead canopy. In 1983, the same two members erected a new outhouse.

In 1986, the group's rules were changed, requiring any new member to be approved by at least 75% of the current members. That same year, vinyl siding was installed on the cabin's exterior walls, and several windows were replaced. New interior paneling and coat hooks were also installed.

That same year, Loren French dug a new well, and a Red Jacket pump was installed for $779, equivalent to $2,265 in today's dollars. Warren Beckley then exchanged the Red Jacket pump for an old electric water system.

Old records of Knoll Lodge include a listing of all 105 members of the group from the founding in 1919 until 1984. The documents outlining the lodge's history, including a copy of the Constitution and a list of 105 members, can be accessed on the Fairbury Echoes Museum website using this link.

The small group of men who envisioned a small cabin on the Vermilion River for social meetings back in 1919 probably never dreamed they were creating an organization that would last for more than 100 years and include between 100 and 200 Fairbury area men as members over that time period.

The cooking shed and water pump just northeast of the main cabin at Knoll Lodge. The logo sign on the east side of the cooking shed states that Knoll Lodge was established in 1919 and the sign gives thanks to Si and Dean Moser.

CHAPTER 61

Fairbury Was a Boom Town the First Twenty Years

In 1878, William Le Baron published his book titled The ***History of Livingston County***. This publication was the first history book written about Livingston County, recounting the early history of Fairbury.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad ran its tracks from Peoria to the Indiana border. Several farmers competed to have the new railroad run through their farms. If they could get the railroad through their land, they could make a substantial amount of money by converting their farmland into city building lots. Caleb L. Patton won the competition by offering the railroad half of his new city lots in exchange for their choice of his farm. Octave Chanute, the engineer for the railroad, accepted Patton's offer. A space of 200 by 870 feet was reserved by the railroad in the center of the original village for depot buildings. Even today, the TP&W still owns some property in Fairbury.

The first thing a new town needs is a U.S. Post Office. Somehow, the paperwork to the federal government got messed up, and the city name came back as Fairburgh. It took about six years to get the name fixed back to the intended Fairbury. H. H. McKee was the first Postmaster of Fairbury.

John Coomer built the first house in the village of Fairbury. He moved to Fairbury from Vermont in 1857. The first store was opened in 1858. This store was owned by a partnership of A. L. Pogue, David Thomas, and R. B. Amsbury.

George W. Morris built the first tavern in the village in 1858. O. S. Mason and Michael Gately owned the first blacksmith shop in Fairbury. In 1859, a large flour mill was built. The developers of the mill borrowed the money from Judge McDowell. When the developers abandoned the project, Judge McDowell completed the building.

The first schoolhouse in Fairbury was a little frame building on the south side of the railroad tracks. Alonzo Straight was the first teacher. A new wood-frame building was built in 1860 on the site that later became Isaac Walton school. In 1868, another wood-frame building was constructed on the site that would later become Edison Grade School.

The first churches were built in the same year as the first taverns that appeared in 1858. The Methodists built a 32-by-55-foot church in 1858. Their first minister was Reverend J. W. Flowers. The Presbyterians also constructed their first church in 1858. It was a 25-by-40-foot church, and the first minister was Reverend A. Eddy.

In 1862, five years after Fairbury was founded, John Marsh and his son Henry Marsh discovered coal on their mine one mile west of Fairbury. This discovery quickly led to the establishment of five coal mines in Fairbury. People traveled from Europe to take coal mining jobs in Fairbury.

The first bank was established in Fairbury by Judge McDowell and Nathan E. Lyman in 1864. Bartlett, Beach, and Dominy started their bank in 1874.

A woolen mill was built in 1867 by brothers from New York named Barnard. Their idea was that sheep raising would become a profitable business, and a mill would be needed. Several Fairbury-area farmers attempted to raise sheep, but the endeavor was unsuccessful. The swampy land around Fairbury caused the sheep to contract a "foot rot" disease. The machinery in the Fairbury mill was removed and shipped to Los Angeles, where sheep could be raised.

In 1868, Isaac and John Wesley Walton started their first retail store on the west end of Locust Street. It would eventually become the largest retail store in Fairbury, and it remained in operation for over 100 years.

Fairbury started with one railroad serving the town. The railroad enabled local farmers to sell their grain and brought in necessary farm supplies. In 1872, Fairbury received a second railroad. This line was the Chicago & Paducah railroad running from Streator to Strawn. This second railroad helped to increase the growth rate of Fairbury.

Fairbury social clubs started almost as soon as the village was founded. The first club was the Masons in 1860. Other early social groups were the Odd Fellows and the Knights Templar.

It took Fairbury nine years to establish a newspaper. In 1866, H. S. Decker began publishing a paper called The Journal. In 1871, Mr. Dimmick started The Independent to represent the east side of Fairbury. In 1876, C. B. Holmes created The Blade to represent the west side of Fairbury. J.S. Scibird then combined the two newspapers into The Independent-Blade.

John Virgin formed a horse importation company in 1870. He imported large Percheron draft horses from France and sold them to farmers in the Fairbury area. He later built his Horse Palace north of Walton's to act as his horse stable.

Except for farming and coal mining, Fairbury in its early years did not have many manufacturing companies. In 1866, George W. Kring started manufacturing field cultivators. He later produced check-row corn planters as well.

Fairbury got its first cemetery in 1855. Initially, it was a tiny cemetery of just six acres located on South Seventh Street. The first burial in that cemetery was that of Mrs. Hughes, the wife of David Hughes. She was buried soon after the cemetery was surveyed.

In this early era, Fairbury was plagued by many massive fires. The town was split into two factions, the West Enders and the East Enders. Many of these fires were blamed on this rivalry. Due to their fire history, insurance companies increased the price of fire insurance to such an extent that most businesses could no longer afford it. There were so many fires that people kept a change of clothes by their back door. They kept these clothes in case a fire started in the middle of the night, and they had to flee their homes.

Fairbury was a boomtown when it first began. The village went from zero residents in 1857 to a population of 2,140 just 23 years later. The town evolved from farmland to a small village, featuring two railroads, taverns, churches, coal mines, a business district, a Post Office, a cemetery, and a local government.

Farmer Caleb Patton was able to persuade railroad engineer Octave Chanute to run the new railroad through his farm by offering the railroad half of his new Fairbury building lots in 1857.

CHAPTER 62

Romantic Strife in the 1870s

One of the many unsolved historical mysteries from the Fairbury area concerns a romance that soured in the 1870s.

This story began with the birth of Christopher Gschwind in Germany. At the age of 20, in 1857, Christopher emigrated from Germany to America. Most people who migrated from Europe to America chose to come to New York City. German immigrants in that era often chose the New Orleans port for its unrivaled access to the American Midwest via river transport, more accommodating local policies, established German communities, and economic shipping options, as well as the desire to reach interior agricultural regions without first settling in eastern coastal cities. Several Fairbury area families chose to emigrate to New Orleans for these reasons.

Christopher started farming in Cropsey Township. Eight years later, in 1865, Christopher's brother Johann Jacob Gschwind emigrated from Germany to New York City. Jacob traveled from New York to the Cropsey area to join his brother in farming. By the time of the 1870 U.S. Census, Christopher and Jacob owned a farm worth $2,000 near Cropsey. This amount would be equivalent to $50,450 in today's dollars. Christopher Gschwind was 33 years of age in 1870.

The Apostolic Christian church began in the state of New York. Very quickly, new churches developed in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and other states. In 1984, Perry A. Klopfenstein published his book titled ***Marching to Zion***. In his book, Klopfenstein details when and how each new Church developed in the United States. By the 1870s, the North and South Side Apostolic churches were first founded in the Fairbury area.

In October of 1874, Christopher decided to marry Pauline Frike in Livingston County. Christopher was 37 and Pauline was 19 years old when they married. They began their married life on Christopher's 120-acre farm in Section 24 of Cropsey Township.

Between about 1853 and 1860, all the farmland in the Fairbury area had been claimed and purchased from the U.S. government for $2.50 per acre. After 1860, farmland had to be bought at a higher price from the original landowners.

In the 1870s, members of the Apostolic Church started to emigrate westward to Kansas. These early settlers were attracted to Kansas because farmland was available at relatively low prices. One of the first Apostolic Christian settlements in Kansas was located in Coffee County, near the present-day town of Gridley, Kansas.

Just six months after he had married Pauline Frike, Christopher Gschwind decided to emigrate from the Cropsey area to Gridley, Kansas. On March 22, 1875, Christopher and his wife, Pauline, sold their 120 acres in Section 24 of Cropsey township to Christian Straisser of Peoria County for $1,989.

Christopher left his newlywed wife in the Fairbury area while he traveled to Kansas to start farming. After being in Kansas for about six months, Christopher contacted his young wife back in the Fairbury area and asked her to join him in the Gridley, Kansas area. Since there were no telephones in that era, he likely communicated with his wife by U.S. mail.

Christopher's young wife replied and said she was not coming to Kansas because she was taking a new job in Peoria. After a few more months in Kansas, Christopher returned to the Fairbury area, looking for his wife. He was shocked to find that she had moved in with a married man in Saybrook. That man had lived in Fairbury before moving to Saybrook, and the Blade reported that he was well-known to the community during his time in Fairbury. Unfortunately, the Blade never revealed the married man's name in its July 14, 1876, article.

The Blade also reported the married man had sent his wife and children to live with his parents while he set up house with Pauline Gschwind in Saybrook. Christopher Gschwind immediately placed two successive ads in the Blade, stating that he was no longer responsible for his wife's debts.

Christopher Gschwind returned to his farm near Gridley, Kansas. He never married again and died at the age of 68 near Gridley, Kansas. His obituary

was published in the August 31, 1905, Burlington Kansas Republican newspaper.

The obituary reported that Mr. Gschwind lived alone on his farm about five miles southwest of Gridley. The morning he died, Mr. Gschwind had a couple of interactions with the two Schwibald brothers, who were hired hands on his farm. Mr. Gschwind told them he was going into his house to shave, and he would see them later that day.

The two brothers began digging a new well for Christopher Gschwind. A few hours later, they returned to Mr. Gschwind's house and found him dead in his yard, a short distance from his front door. The funeral was held at the local German Church.

The obituary recounted the story of Mr. Gschwind becoming separated from his wife in Illinois shortly before he began farming in the Gridley area. The obituary recounted that throughout his life in Kansas, he lived a lonely and peculiar life. He was greatly interested in horticulture, and his farm was stocked with orchards of every variety of fruit trees adapted to the local climate. He was scrupulously honest and also quite an extensive reader, with his house well-stocked with newspapers. He only had one friend, a Mr. Adam Schif. Mr. Schif's wife was a cousin of Mr. Gschwind.

Extensive genealogical research has been unable to determine what happened to Pauline Frike–Gschwind and Christopher's brother, Jacob Gschwind, after the marriage ended. Neither of them shows up in any of the U.S. Census reports after the marriage ended. The identity of the married man in Saybrook has also not yet been discovered.

Christopher Gschwind’s obituary stated that he lived a "lonely and peculiar life" throughout his time in Kansas. In retrospect, he did not make a good decision when he left his 20-year-old, newlywed wife alone in the Fairbury area while he went to Kansas.

It is also odd that Mr. Gschwind's obituary did not mention his brother Jacob, with whom he farmed in Illinois. Perhaps his brother Jacob ran off with Christopher's newlywed wife, and they changed their names to avoid being discovered. The mysteries around this story may be solved someday.

Christopher Gschwind was likely very surprised to read a letter from his newlywed wife stating that she was refusing to travel from Fairbury to Kansas to join him on his new farm.

CHAPTER 63

Fairbury Carriage Company

Until around 1900, the Fairbury economy was based upon horses. Farmers used horses to farm their land. Citizens used horse-drawn buggies for transportation. Several businessmen imported horses from Europe to sell to local farmers. Fairbury had several livery stables where people or visitors could keep their horses.

The first mention in the Blade about the Fairbury Carriage Company was in 1909. Telephones had recently been installed in Fairbury, and the business phone number was updated to 380. Three Fairbury men owned this firm. The first partner was J. N. Bach, who owned a Fairbury lumberyard. The second partner was Joe Swing, a son of Albert Swing from Indiana. The third partner was Samuel R. Stoller (1867-1962).

Sam Stoller was the firm's sales manager. Sam was born in Metamora, Illinois. He married Caroline E. Hoffman of Fairbury in 1894. Sam and Caroline Stoller had one child, Nathalia Caroline Stoller, born in 1905.

In 1909, the firm moved to its new building on West Locust Street. It was at the northeast corner of the First and Locust Street intersection. In 1911, Elmer Odell secured a Michigan 30 auto dealership, and he located his office and salesroom in the building owned by the Fairbury Carriage Company.

The Michigan 30 was an automobile manufactured by the Michigan Buggy Company of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This firm produced automobiles between 1908 and 1913. Frank B. Lay owned the firm, which produced about 7,000 cars during its five years of existence. The Michigan 30 model had 30 horsepower, and the Michigan 40 had 40 horsepower. Henry Ford's Model T only had 20 horsepower.

In 1913, the State of Illinois inspected all businesses in Fairbury. In that audit, the Fairbury Carriage Company reported having four employees. At the Peoria Implement and Vehicle Show that year, the firm displayed four

of its different makes of horse-drawn buggies. Fairbury Carriage Company sold three of the four demonstrator models at the show.

The firm advertised that they were reducing the prices of its horse-drawn buggies. They cut the cost of their steel wheel buggy from $85 to $105 to $55 to $75. They dropped the price of their rubber-tired carriage down to $85. This $85 price tag would be equivalent to $2,236 in today's dollars.

In the era of horse-drawn wagons, the Fairbury Apostolic Christian churches owned horse-drawn hearses. The third and last horse-drawn hearse was purchased by the South Side Church from Sam Stoller of the Fairbury Carriage Company in 1914. This horse-drawn hearse was sturdily built, with large side windows and lanterns that helped dispel the gloominess so characteristic of these vehicles. Since death had little regard for inclement weather, the driver occasionally suffered while performing his duties. Sam Steffen was the driver during the last funeral, where the horse-drawn hearse was used in 1925. A magnificent pair of black horses owned by Sam's father was used to pull it. After this, the local funeral homes provided an automotive hearse as part of their services.

The Fairbury Carriage Company placed employment advertisements in various newspapers in 1914. In the Cincinnati Enquirer, they advertised for a good, all-around carriage trimmer and painter.

In 1916, Frank L. Tipton and his family moved from Kentucky to Fairbury to work for the Fairbury Carriage Co. Just seven months after starting his new job, he had an unfortunate accident. Frank was sawing a strip of wood for the body of a buggy. Somehow, he got the fingers of his left hand under the saw. He lost his thumb and two fingers in the accident.

In 1917, Miss Beatrice Hoker accepted a position at the Fairbury Carriage Company. One of the business partners, Joe Swing, married Miss Minnie Franke of Cissna Park. The firm sold two automobiles that year. Frank J. Kuntz of Strawn bought a new Oakland-six touring car, and J. M. Fetzer bought an Oakland roadster.

The 1918 Blade featured ads for the Oakland Sensible Six automobile, available for sale at the Fairbury Carriage Company. The firm also

advertised that they sold Hercules trailers. These trailers could be used to haul produce, grain, milk cans, trunks, and furniture.

At the 1919 Fairbury Fair, the firm set up a display of their products, including their line of buggies, manure spreaders, and Hercules gasoline engines. When the merry-go-round at the Fairbury Fair quit working, the Fairbury Carriage Company came to the rescue and powered the carnival ride with one of their Hercules engines.

In 1921, the firm sold its building to Claudon Motors and moved to a building just west of Bach's lumberyard. This year was pivotal for the business because they announced that the Fairbury Carriage Company would stop producing handmade buggies. They offered wide tire utility Studebaker wagons for $125 at their new East End office. They also advertised the service of repairing automobile curtains and tops.

Sam Stoller turned 57 years old in 1924. He decided to close his shop and move to Peoria. In 1936, his first wife, Caroline Hoffman, died in Peoria. Sam was 68 years old when his first wife died. He then married 45-year-old Esther Zimmerman in Peoria.

Sam Stoller died in 1962 at the age of 95. He was buried in Peoria's cemetery by his first wife. His second wife, Esther Zimmerman, died in 1967, and she was buried with her sister in Fairbury's Graceland Cemetery.

During its 15-year history, the Fairbury Carriage Company struggled with the dramatic shift from horses to automobiles. The firm tried to adapt by selling cars. Many other Fairbury firms sprang up in that era that focused on selling automobiles. The Fairbury Carriage Company was one of many firms adversely affected by the radical shift from horses to cars.

The Fairbury Carriage Co. initially sold horse-drawn buggies. After the Model T was introduced in 1908, Fairbury residents started switching from horses to automobiles for transportation. The Fairbury Carriage Co. stopped selling horse-drawn buggies and switched to selling automobiles from manufacturers such as the Michigan Automobile company.

CHAPTER 64

Two Irish Brothers Made Fairbury Their Home

The Harrington brothers emigrated from County Mayo, Ireland, to the Fairbury area because of the Potato Famine in Ireland. According to Wikipedia, the Irish economy experienced growth between 1760 and 1815, driven by infrastructure expansion and the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815), which increased demand for food in Britain. Tillage increased to such an extent that only a small amount of land was available to small farmers to feed themselves. The potato was adopted as a primary food source due to its rapid growth in a comparatively small space.

By 1800, the potato had become a staple food for one in three Irish people, particularly during the winter months. It eventually became a staple for farmers throughout the year. A disproportionate share of the potatoes grown in Ireland was the Irish Lumper variety, which created a lack of genetic variability among potato plants, thereby increasing their vulnerability to disease.

In 1845, a blight ruined the potato crop, which continued through 1849. In America, this is often referred to as the Irish Potato Famine—the Irish refer to it as the time of the Great Hunger. Roughly one million people died of famine, and between 1845 and 1855, at least 2.1 million people left Ireland. Ireland's population of 8.5 million residents before the Potato Famine only recovered to 5.3 million in 2025.

The story of the Harrington brothers began with the birth of Edward Harrington in 1819 in County Mayo, Ireland. Ten years later, in 1829, brother James E. Harrington was born in County Mayo, which is in west-central Ireland. The identity of the parents of Edward and James Harrington has not been verified at this time.

When the Potato Famine started in 1845, Edward Harrington was 26, and James E. Harrington was 16. In 1849, four years after the start of the famine period, brothers Edward and James Harrington decided to emigrate from Ireland to America. Their father had died, so they left their widowed mother in Ireland.

The vast majority of the Irish people who emigrated to America sailed from an English port, and it took six to eight weeks to arrive in New York. A small proportion of Irish immigrants landed in Mobile, Alabama, rather than New York. Several Irish groups were established in Mobile, and they continue to exist today.

Edward and James Harrington sailed on a ship for eight weeks before they arrived in Mobile, Alabama, on April 8, 1849. They immediately left Mobile and headed to Cincinnati, Ohio. They likely took a steamboat from Mobile to New Orleans, then another steamboat up the Mississippi River to the Ohio River and Cincinnati.

The two brothers were shocked to find that Cincinnati was in the middle of a massive cholera epidemic.
Cholera was a deadly disease, and in that era, it was usually caused by human waste entering the drinking water supply. Approximately 6,000 Cincinnati residents died of cholera in 1849, about five percent of the city's population.

To avoid contracting cholera, the two Harrington brothers became farmhands on farms located approximately 16 miles away from the city. James Harrington received $72 in pay after working for a farmer for one year. This pay would be equivalent to $2,760 in today's dollars. James sent $60 of his $70 in pay back to his widowed mother in Ireland. Edward Harrington was likely paid the same amount as his brother for working as a farmhand. During the eight years James Harrington worked for three different farmers in the Cincinnati area, his monthly pay ranged from $6 to $15 per month. This pay would equal $230 to $575 monthly in today's dollars.

On May 20, 1853, James Harrington married Bridget McGreal, another Irish immigrant, in the Cincinnati area. They were both 23 years old when they married. They had nine children. Son Edward Harrington (1857-1935) was named after his brother Edward Harrington (1819-1908).

About one year later, on October 5, 1854, Edward Harrington married Irish immigrant Kathryn Bryde. Edward was 35 and Kathryn was 24 when they married. They had nine children. Son James E. Harrington (1857-1950)

was named after his brother James Harrington (1829-1911). The fact that the two brothers named a son after their brother can make understanding the family tree difficult.

In 1857, the James Harrington family moved from Cincinnati to Fairbury. Traveling by covered wagon to Fairbury took them 17 days, averaging about 17 miles per day. In 1857, the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. The James Harrington family arrived in Fairbury on March 27, 1857, before the railroad tracks had been completed from Fairbury to Indiana. James Harrington rented a farm southwest of Fairbury.

Two years after the James Harrington family decided to emigrate from Ohio to Fairbury, the Edward Harrington family also chose to come to Fairbury. Edward Harrington assisted his brother, James Harrington, in farming southwest of Fairbury. The Harrington brothers eventually purchased farmland in Indian Grove township, southwest of Fairbury.

The James Harrington branch of the family became nationally known because of his son, Austin Harrington (1865-1949), who became a dealer in fine horses. Austin Harrington went into business with Frank Ford under the firm name of Ford & Harrington. They continued buying and selling market horses and sold to the largest importers of Percheron, Belgian, Shires, and Hackney horses. In 1906, Ford & Harrington began importing horses, stallions, and mares directly from European breeders. In 1907, the firm expanded by opening horse barns in Parker, South Dakota, and Pueblo, Colorado. George A. Ford, a son of Frank Ford, managed the South Dakota barn.

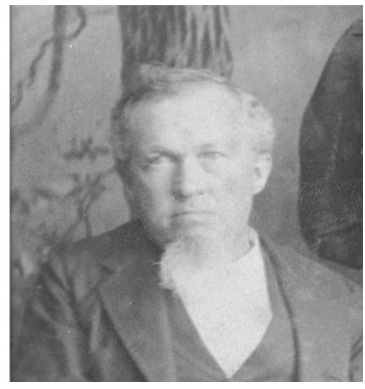
Ford & Harrington developed a national reputation as importers of high-quality European horses. By 1909, they sold 400 to 500 horses annually at a price range from $500 to $3,500 per horse. The firm began issuing annual catalogs with horses for sale. They hired the famous artist Lou Burk to draw illustrations of each horse offered for sale in the catalog.

Many families in Central Illinois can trace their ancestors back to the children of either Edward or James Harrington. For example, Margaret Harrington (1900-1952), a granddaughter of Edward Harrington, married Francis E. Rathbun (1900-1974). Her children included Margaret J.

Rathbun (1920-2010), R. James Rathbun (1927-2013), and Duane A. Rathbun (1935-2021).

In Fairbury, Margaret Rathbun married Nelson "Jim" Claudon Jr. (1920-2013). The Claudon family is also one of Fairbury's long-time families.

Edward Harrington died in 1908 at the age of 89, and James Harrington died in 1911 at the age of 82. Both brothers are buried at Saint John's Catholic Cemetery just north of Fairbury. These two brothers and their descendants have played a crucial role in the development of Fairbury.



The Harrington brothers were born in Ireland and they emigrated to the Fairbury area. Ed Harrington is shown on the left side and his brother James Harrington is shown on the right side.

CHAPTER 65

Making Fairbury History Easily Available

Much of Fairbury's history is contained in old copies of the Blade newspaper. Old copies of the Blade can be easily searched by anyone using the Dominy Memorial Library website. The story of how the old Blades became digitized and made available online is an engrossing saga.

The Blade newspaper traces its roots back to the combination of two competing newspapers. In 1871, the Dimmicks began publishing the Independent newspaper in Fairbury. In 1876, C. B. Holmes started the Blade. These papers were published until 1876 when J. S. Scibird became proprietor. Scibird combined the two newspapers and named the new publication the Independent-Blade.

Each year the Blade was published, they kept a paper copy of each issue. At the end of each year, these issues were bound into a large hard-bound book. The oldest bound book that still exists today dates back to 1877. Before the advent of computers, Blade personnel would retrieve old stories by having employees thumb through the old books.

At some point, the Blade started sending a copy of each paper issue to the University of Illinois. Personnel at the university would photograph the paper issue and make a roll of microfilm. This microfilming process was a manual operation and was, therefore, subject to human error. In a few cases, pages were skipped, or sheets were folded over when photographed.

Microfilm is a plastic-like material that contains a copy of the original document. It is similar to a photographic negative. In 1935, Kodak's Recordak division began filming and publishing The New York Times on reels of 35-millimeter microfilm, marking the beginning of the era of newspaper preservation on film. This method of information storage received the sanction of the American Library Association at its annual meeting in 1936 when it officially endorsed microfilm. For libraries, microfilming allowed permanent storage of paper documents. The microfilm itself took almost no storage space in the library compared to paper documents.

The rolls of microfilm with copies of the Blade newspapers were sent to the Dominy Memorial Library. The library purchased a microfilm reader for the public to access the Blade archives. A library patron was given the roll of microfilm. Each roll usually corresponded to one calendar year. The patron took the roll to the microfilm viewer. The end of the roll had to be threaded carefully into the viewing machine. The patron could then slowly spin the roll and look forward or backward to see different Blade issues.

The microfilm reader also had a print option. The patron could select an article, push a button, and a paper copy of that article would be printed. The library charged a nominal fee per printed page to cover the cost of printing materials.

To use the microfilm, the patron had to know the date the article was printed in the Blade. There was no easy way to search by keyword in the Blade archives. It took a considerable amount of time and patience to locate the articles of interest. For these reasons, very few people were able to access Fairbury's history easily.

In 2016, the printer on the library's microfilm viewer broke. Because the viewer was obsolete, the printer could not be repaired. Researchers had to take their digital cameras with them and photograph the viewing screen on the microfilm viewer. Library management decided to digitize the old reels of microfilm. Using donations, the library hired an outside firm to convert the microfilm reels to online, word-searchable content. The online Blade archives are similar to the Pantagraph and Chicago Tribune, which have been digitized for many years. The library decided to make access free to everyone. The Blade archives can be accessed by visiting the Dominy Memorial Library website, selecting the "Resources" tab, and then choosing the "The Blade Archive" option.

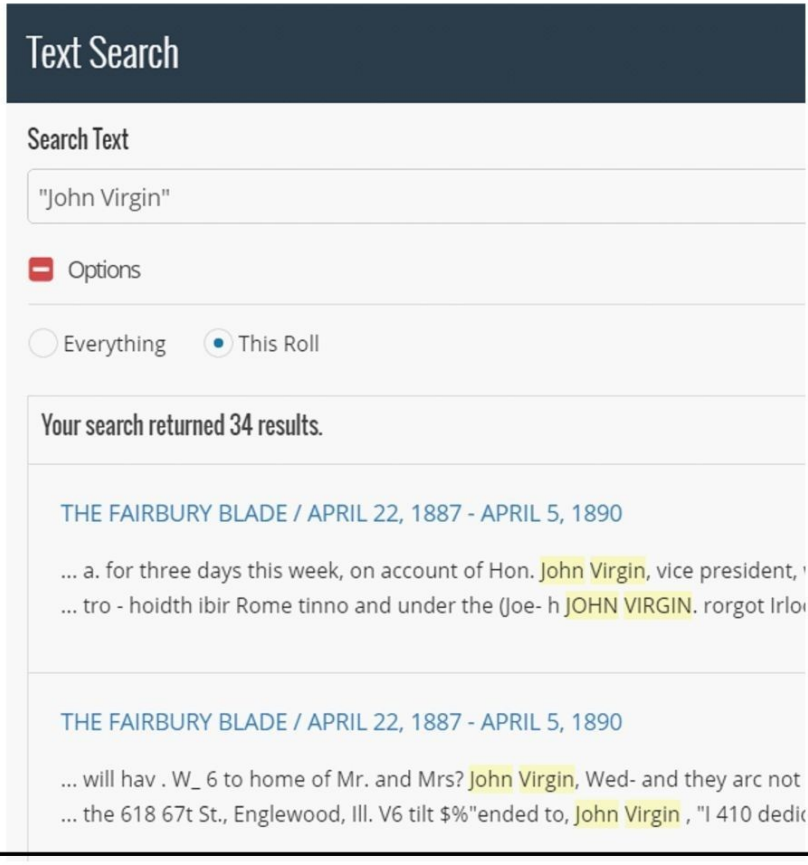
It is still beneficial to know what year you are searching for when using the online content. If a word search is performed on all the years of the Blade using a common word, more than 1,000 hits will be found. It is impractical to review each of the 1,000 hits individually. On the library website, you can select which year to search. Searching in a particular year is the most efficient method of searching. You can print or download any images that are found.

In 2017, the Blade closed its Fairbury office and relocated the last 20 years of the large Blade-bound books to the Leader office in Pontiac. The Blade generously donated the older bound books to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Volunteers moved the books and their bookcases from the Blade office to the second floor of the Fairbury Echoes Museum. When the Blade ceased publication at the end of 2022, the remainder of the bound books were donated to the Fairbury Echoes Museum.

The Fairbury Echoes Museum has 113 printed and bound copies of the old Blade newspaper in its collection. They date from 1877 to 1999. Unfortunately, 12 of the old books are missing. The fate of the missing books remains unknown. Most of the disappeared issues date back to the early 1900s.

The old paperbound books remain valuable, even though the material has been digitized and is now available online. Sometimes, the microfilming of the page did not produce a clear image, making it illegible online. If the old paperbound book is available, a legible copy of that page can be obtained by photographing the paper copy. Almost all the photos online are illegible. If the old bound book is available, a digital camera can be used to photograph the original image in the paper edition.

The online Blade archives are not perfect. For example, if the original microfilm copy of the paper Blade was poor, a word search will not find that word. But compared to the microfilm reader system, the online Blade archives are phenomenal. History researchers can search 150 years of Blades from their cell phone or computer at home. Thanks to the Dominy Memorial Library, the Blade archives have been digitized, making Fairbury history readily available to everyone.


Text Search
Search Text
"John Virgin"
Options
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Your search returned 34 results.
THE FAIRBURY BLADE / APRIL 22, 1887 - APRIL 5, 1890
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An example of searching the Blade newspaper archives for John Virgin, a prominent resident of early Fairbury.

CHAPTER 66

Fascinating Journey of Rare Fairbury Documents

I have now researched and written over 360 articles about Fairbury area history. I am running out of ideas for new history stories. A few weeks ago, I was driving from Germantown Hills back to Fairbury on Route 24. I was thinking of some new stories to write about while I was driving.

I then got the idea for another story about John Virgin, one of Fairbury's most prominent early citizens. I knew I had already written one story about him, but I figured I could write another because he led such an interesting life.

When I arrived at my office in Fairbury, I went to my desktop computer to record the idea of writing another John Virgin story. Before I made the entry in my spreadsheet, I checked my email. There was a new email from a woman in Washington State, Betsy Howell, who wanted to send me a big box of John Virgin family-related items!

She sent me a medium-sized grocery box packed full of John Virgin-related materials by U.S. Mail. These materials will be added to the holdings of the Fairbury Echoes Museum after they have all been analyzed.

With the help of Betsy Howell from Washington, we determined how this box survived despite containing materials that date back to before the Civil War. This story starts with the death of John Virgin in 1900 in Fairbury. When John died, his wife and two daughters survived him.

One of these two daughters, Minnie Alice Virgin, had married Addison Cooley in 1892 in Fairbury. They moved to the state of Washington, and in 1897, John Virgin Cooley, the only grandchild of John Virgin, was born in Spokane, Washington. Around the time John Virgin died in 1900, Addison and Minnie Cooley moved back to Fairbury with their two-year-old son, John Virgin Cooley.

By the time of the 1910 U.S. Census, John Virgin's widow, Serepta "Jennie" Virgin, had relocated to San Bernardino County, California. John Virgin's widow was 67, and she lived with her 25-year-old daughter, Daisy Dean Virgin. Serepta Virgin took her box of family-related items from Fairbury to California.

Daughter Minnie A. Cooley remained in Fairbury with her husband and 12-year-old son John Virgin Cooley. Fifty-year-old Addison Cooley was employed as a paper hanger in Fairbury. They lived on Chestnut Street.

In 1917, America entered World War I. Seventeen-year-old John Virgin Cooley enlisted in the Navy in San Pedro, California. He served in the submarine fleet during World War I, operating in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1920, John Virgin's daughter, Daisy Dean Virgin, married Hal Smith in San Bernardino County, California. Hal was 50 and Daisy was 40 when they married. They had no children.

In the 1920 Census, Serepta Virgin was 76 years old and lived with her daughter, Daisy Dean Virgin, in San Bernardino County until Daisy got married. The Cooley family resided in Fairbury in 1920, living on East Chestnut Street. This family included Addison Cooley, 57, Minnie Cooley, 52, and their son John Virgin Cooley, age 22.

Also in the 1920 Census, Elizabeth Scouler lived with her parents in Fairbury. In 1927, she married John Virgin Cooley. By 1927, Addison and Minnie Cooley had moved to San Bernardino County. John V. Cooley was 29 and Elizabeth Scouler was 28 when they got married at his parents' ranch house in San Bernardino County.

By 1927, all of John Virgin's surviving family was living in San Bernardino County. In 1930, Hal Smith, husband of Daisy Dean Virgin, died at the age of 60. Widow Daisy Dean Smith moved in with her mother. Hal Smith and Daisy Dean Virgin were only married for 10 years.

In 1935, John Virgin's widow, Serepta Jane "Jennie" McDowell–Virgin, died in San Bernardino County at the age of 93. Since John Virgin Cooley was the only surviving grandchild of John Virgin, the box of family-

related items from the John Virgin family was likely given to him in California.

After her mother died in 1935, Daisy Dean Virgin lived alone until she died in 1945 at the age of 68.

In 1936, Addison Cooley, husband of Minnie Alice Virgin, died in San Bernardino County at the age of 73. His widow, Minnie Cooley, continued to live alone until she died in 1955 at the age of 86.

In the early 1940s, John Virgin Cooley was in the trucking and hay business in the San Bernardino County area. In 1944, he became the Superintendent of the Park and Farm Department for the City of Ontario, California.

In the 1950 Census, John Virgin Cooley continued to live with his wife, Elizabeth. He was 52 and she was 51 when the Census was taken. In May of 1954, John V. Cooley married his second wife, Florence Riley, in Las Vegas. They continued to live in the same area and started taking vacations to a cabin they owned in Wyoming.

John Virgin Cooley's first wife died in 1957 at the age of 58. In 1960, John V. Cooley retired from his position as park superintendent. In 1964, John V. Cooley and his second wife moved from San Bernardino County, California, to Lakeside, Montana. The unincorporated area of Lakeside is next to Flathead Lake, just south of Kalispell, Montana. John Virgin Cooley took the box of John Virgin's family items from California to Montana.

In 1978, John Virgin Cooley died at the age of 80 near Kalispell, Montana. His second wife apparently kept the box of John Virgin's family-related materials after he died.

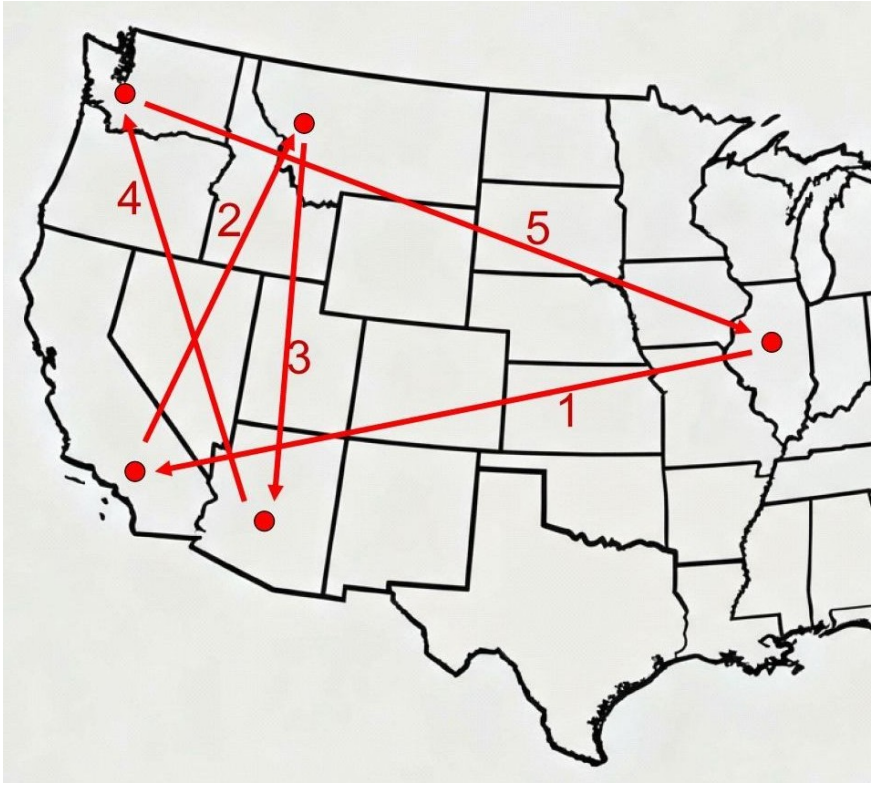
In 1993, John Virgin's second wife, Florence Riley, married Harold Dunning in Arizona. Mr. Dunning was a widower who had been married for 56 years and had two daughters. Harold was 83 and Florence was 80 when they got married. The box of John Virgin's family-related materials got moved to Arizona.

Just about two years after they were married, Florence Riley, John Virgin Cooley's second wife, died at the age of 82 in Arizona. The box of John Virgin's family-related materials stayed with her husband, Harold Dunning, in Arizona.

In 2002, Harold Dunning died in Arizona at the age of 92. One of his two daughters, after his death, cleaned out his house and found a box of John Virgin family-related items. She thought it contained a lot of rare and interesting items, so she saved the box and took it back to her home in Seattle, Washington. Through a friend of a friend, she gave the box to Betsy Howell of Port Townsend, Washington, because Betsy was researching her great-great-grandfather, who had served in the 72nd Illinois Infantry during the Civil War. After having the box of John Virgin family-related items for about 12 years, Betsy contacted the Fairbury Echoes Museum and then shipped the box from Washington to Fairbury.

The box of John Virgin's family-related materials made a fantastic journey from Fairbury to California, Montana, Arizona, Washington, and back to Fairbury. Many thanks go to Betsy Howell for contacting the Fairbury Echoes Museum and for shipping the box of rare historical items back to Fairbury.

Once the box of John Virgin's family-related items has been analyzed, we will likely have several more stories about the interesting life of early Fairbury citizen John Virgin and his wife, Serepta Jane "Jennie" McDowell.



Route that box of John Virgin family-related materials took from leaving Fairbury around 1910 and returning to Fairbury in 2025.

CHAPTER 67

Fairbury Apostolic Christians Served in WWI

By 1915, most of Fairbury's Civil War veterans had died. Their grandsons living in Fairbury had no real idea of how terrible war can really be. These grandsons were very patriotic and were ready to enlist in any new wars. The United States also had no experience with managing a conscription or mandatory draft system. In the last great military conflict, the Civil War, the Union Army received less than 2% of its soldiers through the draft.

By definition, a conscientious objector is a person who, for reasons of conscience, objects to complying with a particular requirement, primarily serving in the armed forces. Because the federal government had no experience with a draft, it also had no idea of how to handle conscientious objectors. The government underestimated how unyielding conscientious objectors would be in refusing to bear arms. The military also had no policy or guidelines for conscientious objectors to serve in non-combat roles.

Most of the members of the Apostolic Churches in the Fairbury area originally came from Germany or Switzerland. They often spoke German in public until they gradually learned English. Their church services were usually conducted in German.

In April of 1917, America declared war against Germany. Congress passed a new law, the Selective Service Act of 1917, also known as the Selective Draft Act. Out of the 4.8 million Americans who served in World War I, two million volunteered, and 2.8 million were drafted into the war.

The official position of the Apostolic Church was non-combatant. Consequently, the young men it sent to the armed forces would not bear arms.

Newton D. Baker was the Secretary of War for the United States. His strategy was first to get as many of the churches as possible to send their drafted conscientious objectors to basic training camp. Baker told many of these churches that if they sent their members to basic training camp, the

government would respect their conscience. As a result, many conscientious objectors reported to basic training camps.

Baker sent secret orders to the military camp commanders, telling them the conscientious objectors were coming to their camps. He told the commanders it was their duty to persuade the pacifists to take up weapons and join the great crusade to make the world safe for democracy. Baker's instructions also directed that conscientious objectors be treated decently and segregated into separate detachments. The conscientious objectors should be kept close enough to the camp activities that they would be thrilled by the enthusiasm and idealism of the war enterprise.

Baker's strategy was a recipe for confused confrontation. The generals running the military camps were not schooled in the technique of friendly persuasion. Their job was to prepare an army to fight in Europe. As a result, some of the conscientious objectors in the military camps were subjected to humiliation, physical beatings, court-martial, intimidation, and harassment. Some conscientious objectors were given orders to put on uniforms and take up weapons. When they refused these orders, they were court-martialed and sentenced to 15 to 35 years in a military prison. Two Hutterite Mennonites died as a result of mistreatment and ensuing illness.

In his 1984 book, Marching to Zion, Perry A. Klopfenstein recounted that Henry Leonhardt was a member of the Fairbury Apostolic Christian Church. Henry was sent to Camp Wheeler for his basic training. At basic training camp, Leonhardt was beaten until he was black and blue. Because he mainly spoke German, military authorities suspected he was a spy.

Sam Zimmerman, of rural Fairbury, also served as a conscientious objector at Camp Wheeler, although he was not yet a member of the church. He was very much aware of the tension conscientious objectors experienced. In a series of letters to his future wife, Louise Koehl, he wrote, "A fellow sure has to be careful what he does and what he says down here." He also told her, when feeling deep concern about his conscientious objector status, "I feel sorry for the whole bunch of us, but I guess we will have to bear the burden."

Always anxious about how his officers might treat him or where he would eventually be shipped, Zimmerman described the situation as being in

"boiling hot water." Zimmerman wrote that seven soldiers tried to force him to carry a gun. He refused. The soldiers struck him with a club. Zimmerman recounted that it was the worst beating he had ever received.

Benjamin Nussbaum wrote two pamphlets about the history of the Apostolic Church. In 1973, he wrote his South Side history, and in 1975, he wrote his North Side History. In Benjamin's South Side history pamphlet, he included five biographies of Fairbury men who served in World War I. These five men all attended basic training at Camp Wheeler near Macon, Georgia.

Emil Bahler (1891-1959) was transferred to the Veterinary Corps after basic training was finished. Jacob Peter (1893-1965) was first assigned to horse-shoeing school. Jacob was then sent to auto mechanic school.

During World War I, the world experienced the Spanish Flu pandemic. The Spanish Flu killed more soldiers than were killed in battle. Cropsey farmer Elmer Steffen was assigned to the Veterinary Corps. While on leave, Elmer died from the Spanish Flu.

Walter Steffen (1896-1980) was assigned to an ambulance company. He was shipped to France, but he contracted the Spanish Flu. He was sent to several hospitals and survived the Spanish Flu. Samuel Zimmerman (1895-1988) was assigned to the Veterinary Corps after finishing basic training.

Fairbury area Apostolic Christians were willing to serve in the military, but would not bear weapons or kill anyone. They were ready to serve anywhere, including combat zones and support groups. In these support groups, they often helped the sick, the wounded, and the dying. The U.S. military learned from this experience, and conscientious objectors were much better managed in World War II.

Mess Hall at Camp Wheeler in Macon, Georgia. At least five Fairbury Apostolic Christian men received their basic training at Camp Wheeler.

CHAPTER 68

Fairbury Woman Countered Tokyo Rose in World War II

During World War II, several English-speaking women were hired by the Japanese Empire to broadcast propaganda on the radio to American service members in the Pacific Theater and their families in North America. The goal was to demoralize Allied forces abroad and their families back home. These women were commonly referred to as "Tokyo Rose" by the American press.

A Fairbury native, Virginia Claudon, while serving with the Red Cross in India and Pakistan, was recruited to make nightly radio broadcasts to counter Tokyo Rose's negative propaganda. Her upbeat reports about the War, coupled with entertaining music, helped to lift the spirits of American military personnel in the Pacific Theater.

The family story of Virginia Claudon began with the birth of Nicholas Claudon in France in 1800. In 1836, Nicholas married Barbara Baechler in France. Nicholas was 36, and Barbara was 22 when they married. They had five sons and three daughters in France. Most of Nicholas Claudon's eight children eventually emigrated to the Fairbury area.

For over 100 years, the Claudon family was involved with various Fairbury businesses. Most of these were started by descendants of one of the sons of Nicholas Claudon. This son was Andrew Baechler Claudon. He emigrated to Chenoa in 1867 and then to Fairbury in 1869. Andrew ran the Fairbury grain elevator with his brother Nicholas Jr. and owned the Claudon State Bank in Fairbury. A. B. Claudon married Mary 'Mollie' Alice McDowell, and they had five children.

Besides the Claudon Bank, which is now the Lost In Time Restaurant, descendants of A. B. Claudon operated a grain elevator, a livery stable, and a car dealership.

Virginia Claudon, the World War II radio announcer, was a descendant of another son of Nicholas Claudon Sr. (1800-1893), Nicholas B. Claudon Jr.

(1855-1915), who emigrated to Chenoa in 1873. Nicholas initially worked on the Flanagan farm of his brother-in-law, Dan King. He then became a partner in the Danvers mercantile business of Stuckey & Claudon. Nicholas then established the firm of Claudon Brothers in Fairbury, which was a grain elevator business. Nicholas married Mary Ann Schirtz, and they had two children.

The only daughter of Nicholas Claudon Jr. was Frances Goldeline Claudon (1888-1985). She married George Royal McCabe (1881-1937) in a huge wedding at Fairbury. He worked for an insurance company. The couple lived in the Peoria area their whole lives, and they had no children.

The only son of Nicholas Claudon Jr. was Chester Joseph Claudon Sr. (1884-1980). He was born in Fairbury and married Leona Carlotta James (1889-1989). She was the daughter of Percy Chatham James Sr. (1852-1937) and Olive May Filley (1867-1955). They had two children. Chester J. Claudon Sr. initially helped his father in Fairbury with their grain business. He then became one of the pioneers of auto dealers in Central Illinois, selling Stoddard-Dayton automobiles.

Chester J. Claudon Sr.'s family and his sister's family, the McCabes, began vacationing in the wintertime in the Palm Beach, Florida, area. Both Chester J. Claudon Sr. and George R. McCabe died in the Palm Beach area.

The only son of Chester J. Claudon Sr. was Chester J. Claudon Jr. (1922-2020). He was raised in Fairbury and married Martha Ann Soldwedel (1929-2024). They had four children.

The only daughter of Chester and Leona Claudon was Virginia James Claudon. She was born in 1920 in Fairbury and attended Fairbury Township High School. According to the 1935 Crier, in her junior year in High School, she played the part of Mona, the French maid, in the play titled "Am I Intruding." Other students who appeared in this play included Betty Nussbaum, John Langstaff, John Bushman, and Bruce Barnes.

Virginia Claudon initially attended Wesley College, a women's college in Macon, Georgia. She then transferred and graduated from William and Mary College in Williamsburg, Virginia, with the Class of 1940. She

volunteered to help in the Physical Therapy department of the Ream General Hospital in Palm Beach. She had a difficult time learning how to deal with severely injured American pilots.

She was then cleared for top-secret work at the Morrison Field Air Base in the intelligence office. She was saddened to learn of the death of American pilots. One day, she discovered her fiancé, Lieutenant Langdon Long, a graduate of the Citadel, had been killed when four American planes were shot down in Africa. After her fiancé was killed, she decided not to become romantically involved with anyone until the War was over. She volunteered with the Red Cross and traveled to their headquarters in Washington, DC. She decided to have four wisdom teeth pulled before she left to go overseas, and one of them became infected. Because of this infection, she had to miss the group that was sent to France.

Sent by train to California. On March 23, 1945, she left from California aboard a Navy ship with 3,100 troops and 36 female Red Cross volunteers. The ship sailed for weeks before docking in Melbourne, Australia. The ship sailed again until reaching Calcutta, India. It was under English control at that time. Living conditions were terrible, and malaria was a constant risk.

She and her friend flew on a C-47 cargo plane to Pakistan. In Karachi, she began broadcasting for 55 minutes every night to counter Tokyo Rose's broadcasts. Rumors were started that she was having an affair. To stop the rumors, she invented a story that she was engaged to James Scribner Allen (1919-1997), a man she knew from Palm Beach. A friend loaned her a small diamond engagement ring to wear. Virginia later recounted that her ruse worked and she had no more problems with cavorting G.I.'s. She said a couple of small lies were worth it to protect her reputation.

She got word of the Japanese surrender and the end of the War. She was summoned to Calcutta to be interviewed for a role in a play. Famous movie actor Melvyn Douglas asked her to be in a Noel Coward play to entertain the troops in Calcutta. Virginia had to rely on the acting skills she had learned while performing as a Junior in a play in 1935 at Fairbury Township High School.

After the War, Virginia actually did marry James S. Allen. They had four children. In 2005, when she was 85, Virginia wrote a 22-page manuscript recounting her service with the Red Cross during World War II. She also made an oral recording for the Library of Congress describing her life and her service during the War. One can access this information at https://tinyurl.com/23darm3t.

In 2008, when she was 88 years old, Virginia received a commendation from the State of Minnesota for serving her country, upholding the principles of freedom, and paving the way for future generations of women in the military.

In February 2022, when she was 102, Virginia gave an interview to the Star Tribune in Minnesota. She told the reporter that the COVID pandemic was nothing compared to the conditions she experienced during World War II in India. No obituaries for Virginia Allen were found in Minnesota. If she is still alive, she is 105 years old. A copy of this article can be viewed at https://tinyurl.com/5x37y646.

During World War II, Fairbury had 345 men serve in the military and nine women who were nurses. In her own way, Virginia Claudon–Allen also contributed to the war effort by serving overseas with the American Red Cross and countering Tokyo Rose's radio broadcasts.

Library of Congress photo of Virginia Claudon doing her radio broadcast during World War II to offset the radio broadcasts of Tokyo Rose.

CHAPTER 69

Fairbury Woman National Leader for Women's Rights

The WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) was founded in Ohio in 1873 and became the largest group advocating for women's rights in the United States. Margaret Cairns–Munns (1870-1957) was born in Fairbury, and she became the National Treasurer of the WCTU from 1915 until 1946.

The family story of Margaret Cairns – Munns began with the birth of her father, James H. Cairns, in Scotland in 1824. In 1848, he married Sarah Spence Ewart in Newcastle, England. James and Sarah were both 24 years old when they married. They eventually had nine children. When James Cairns got married, he worked as an engineer.

One year after they married, they emigrated to America. He initially worked as a Master Mechanic. In the 1850 Census, the couple lived in Hanover, New Jersey, and he was listed as a machinist. Their first child, Peter B. Cairns, was born that year.

By 1856, when James Cairns was 32, he switched from a Master Mechanic to a Baptist Minister. By the time of the 1860 Census, the family had moved to Hudson, Illinois. James gave his occupation as a Baptist minister. The children living with their parents included Peter, 10, Elizabeth, 6, George, 2, and John, one.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. According to the 1878 Livingston County History Book, the Baptists in Fairbury began to raise funds to build a new church around 1861. This new church was built in 1865. It was a brick edifice measuring 38×50 feet and cost $3,000. The pastor in 1865 was Rev. James Cairns, and he dedicated the new church at its grand opening.

In the 1870 Census, the family lived in Indian Grove Township, and James Cairns's occupation was clergyman. The children living at home at the time of the census included Elizabeth, 16; George, 12; John, 10; James, 8;

Mary, 4; and Lissa, 2. Shortly after the census was taken, daughter Margaret Agnes Cairns was born in Fairbury.

When Margaret Cairns was eight years of age, the family moved to Kansas. Son John William Cairn later recounted that when he was 18 years old, he helped to drive a covered wagon from Fairbury to Winfield, Kansas.

In the 1880 Census, the Cairns family lived in Winfield, Kansas. James Cairn's occupation was preaching. James was 56, and his wife Sarah was 57. The children living at home included John, 20, James, 18, Mary, 14, Lucy, 11, and Maggie (Margaret), age nine.

The family next moved from Kansas to the Seattle, Washington area. An 1884 Washington newspaper story reported that local services would include Rev. J. Cairns from Winfield, Kansas.

Another Washington newspaper story in 1884 reported that Mary Cairns, daughter of Rev. Cairns, had married John Pattison. Her husband became a lawyer and later served as the mayor of Colfax, Washington. John Pattison also ran for Governor, but lost that election.

Margaret Cairns was highly educated for the era in which she lived. She first attended Colfax College and then transferred to California College in Oakland, where she received a B.A. degree in the Class of 1891.

In 1892, Margaret Cairns went on a vacation to England. During her stay there, she witnessed the doings of the Britishers at the general election. Margaret told a reporter that she was more in love with the United States and its institutions than ever. The article reported that Miss Cairns would be teaching at the local public school when the school term started.

Margaret continued to teach and attend college. In 1894, she received an M.A. degree from the California College.

In 1895, during the Christmas break, the local school board requested that two teachers resign due to incompetence. One of these teachers was Margaret Cairns, the daughter of the well-known Rev. J. Cairns at the local Baptist Church. One teacher resigned, but Margaret refused to resign.

When Margaret returned to her classroom to start teaching after the holiday break, she found another teacher had been hired to take her place. Margaret sued the local school board, won her case, and the jury awarded her $250. That award would be equivalent to $9,575 in today's dollars.

Also in 1895, Margaret Cairns married lawyer Horace G. Munns. He was 37, and she was 25 when they married. They had one child, Harold G. Munns, born in 1897.

1898 was expected to be a happy year for the Rev. Cairns' family, as they were planning to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary by taking a vacation to Hawaii in November.

Unfortunately, Horace Munns died in February of consumption at the age of 39. Consumption, now called tuberculosis, had no cure in that era.

Margaret Cairns – Munns decided to accompany her parents on their voyage to Hawaii and to take her 18-month-old son with them. Unfortunately, the young boy fell very ill while at sea and died shortly after they landed in Hawaii. He was buried in Hawaii.

Margaret moved back in with her parents. In the 1900 Census, 29-year-old Margaret Munns reported that she was a widow. Her parents were both 76 years old. Local newspapers reported that Margaret had devoted her life to the temperance movement and began giving many speeches on the evils of alcohol. She became the Corresponding Secretary of the West Washington branch of the WCTU.

In August of 1908, the Fairbury Blade newspaper reported that Thomas A. Beach had received in the mail a copy of the Seattle Post newspaper about the 60th wedding anniversary of Rev. and Mrs. James Cairns of Seattle. Thomas A. Beach recounted that he knew the couple and that he was the pastor at the Fairbury Baptist Church in the 1860s.

Margaret Cairns–Munns served as the Corresponding Secretary of the West Washington WCTU from 1900 to 1915. She was also the managing editor of the *White Ribbon Bulletin*, the state Union's official paper.

In 1915, Margaret Munns moved to Evanston, Illinois, to serve as Treasurer of the National WCTU, a post she held for more than three decades until her retirement in 1946.

In 1925, Margaret was elected Treasurer of the World's WCTU at the 1925 convention in Edinburgh, Scotland, and continued in that global role until 1953, overseeing finances and traveling widely to promote temperance and women's citizenship.

Margaret retired as the Treasurer for the National WCTU in 1946. She retired as Treasurer of the World's WCTU in 1953. She moved back to Seattle and died there in 1957 at the age of 87. Because of her prominence in the WCTU, her obituary was printed in many different newspapers across the United States.

Today, according to Wikipedia, Margaret Cairns–Munns is remembered as an American pioneer schoolteacher in Washington State and a temperance reformer. She served as Treasurer of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) (1915–46) and later, as Treasurer of the World's WCTU (1925–53).

Rev. James Cairns was the minister at the first Baptist Church built in Fairbury in 1865. His daughter, Margaret Cairns was born in Fairbury and she became a national leader in the temperance and women's suffrage movement.

CHAPTER 70

The Most Ornery Boys in Fairbury History [The McDowell Brothers]

According to Alma Lewis James (1899-1979), a Fairbury historian, the most ornery boys in Fairbury's history were the McDowell boys. In her ***Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars*** book, Alma Lewis James recounts many of the sometimes humorous antics of the McDowell boys.

The father of these three young hooligans was Isaac P. McDowell. He was an Elder of the Methodist Church. Isaac was a tall, thin man with a bald head and chin whiskers. A person who remembered him described him briefly as a "sanctimonious old coot". He left his religion in his pew. On weekdays, he busily wrung a fortune from a reluctant world with tombstones, real estate, banking, or anything else that came to hand. He was widely considered to drive better than a shrewd bargain, but he displayed the most amazing gullibility about his boys.

The oldest of the three McDowell boys was "Tommy", Thomas Scott O'Neil (TSO) McDowell(1858-1911). The middle brother was Elmer E. McDowell (1862-1918), and he was remembered as the ringleader of the three boys. The youngest brother was John Van McDowell (1864-1917).

Alma Lewis James reported that the Fairbury boys did not like the Pontiac boys coming to Fairbury and trying to steal away their girl friends. The McDowell boys were particularly hard on the Pontiac boys, who, unlike themselves, had the reputation of being quite fancy dressers, because they wore light plug hats and stylish suits when they came to Fairbury.

The first time the McDowell boys caught a Pontiac boy visiting a Fairbury girl's house, they let him off with a warning, since it was considered that ignorance was the cause of the mistake. If the same Pontiac boy committed a second offense, they waited until he had reached his destination, and there in plain sight, while he paused to wipe the dust off his shoes with his pocket handkerchief, they peppered him with rotten eggs.

One dose of the rotten eggs was usually sufficient to keep the Pontiac boy clear from Fairbury, but if his bravery exceeded his discretion, and he came the third time, he got the stuffed club treatment, which was sure to be conclusive.

The stuffed club was a weapon invented by the McDowell brothers. It was a canvas sack, six inches in diameter and twelve inches long. It was tightly stuffed with excelsior and coarse salt and tied to a two-foot stick. As a weapon, it had range, weight, and flexibility, and quite easily knocked a man unconscious.

The McDowell brothers were famous in Fairbury for the trick they pulled on their own father at the Methodist Church. One Sunday, after he finished preaching, Isaac McDowell went to the hitching rack in front of the church to drive his horse team home. But one by one, his wagon wheels would fall off, and so, dressed in his Sunday best, he would wrestle them back in place.

His boys never raised a finger to help him, but they did express the profoundest sympathy, wondering loudly who could have done such a cowardly thing to such a nice older man. The McDowell boys gave repeat performances of this, undoubtedly by popular request, varying it with the times they hid the taps under the back seat cushions so that the wheels kept coming off all the way home.

The McDowell boys also exchanged the wheels, front with back, on the Baptist minister's carriage. It caused no damage, but since the rear wheels were typically larger, the buggy's new angle discombobulated the horse and upset the preacher's dignity.

Every boy in Fairbury looked forward to the annual visit by the circus. Often, boys would try to sneak under the tent to avoid paying the admission fee. One year, the McDowell boys did not care for the circus performance they watched. The circus tent had been pitched on a vacant lot next to the railroad.

A TP&W freight train had stopped and was switching on the tracks. The McDowell boys tied some of the tent ropes to the end of the train caboose.

When the train pulled out, the tent went right along with it, leaving behind a stunned audience and troupe of performers beneath the stars.

Alma Lewis James recounted that Fairbury became infamous to TP&W passengers upon their arrival at the train depot. It got so that on the passenger trains, moving on again into Fairbury after the stop at the mines for coal, had their brakemen go through the coaches, bawling: "Fairbury! Fairbury! Pull your windows down!"

The initiated complied immediately, but the innocents who wondered what all the fuss was about and hesitated until the train had reached the depot, were caught slam in the face with a well—aimed pie.

Blackberry or raspberry pies obtained from the railroad restaurant were the favorite missiles, as the results from these were particularly spectacular, but a brush full of paint or whitewash swiped across a victim's face was almost as good, or even a stick with a blob of "car dough" on it. ("Dough" was the hard grease in the wheel box of the railroad cars.)

Sometimes, if the passengers were too wary, all of the train windows remained closed. Then the McDowell boys would stage a rousing fight, with much yelling and arm-swinging. Human curiosity can stand just so much, and so the windows would go up again. The heads would pop out to see what was going on, and the McDowell boys would stop the fake fight and begin throwing pies at the passengers. In a few minutes, another train with its luckless passengers would pull out to spread the news afar, their feelings in no way modified by the howls of laughter from the depot loafers.

Halloween time in Fairbury was a pure nightmare. Most of the day following was spent hunting for scattered personal property around town. Certain things were automatically expected: the wandering front gate, the overturned privy, the vegetables and the dead cats scattered on the front porch, and the missing sections of boardwalks and fences.

The McDowell boys were credited with one of the most interesting Halloween pranks. One morning after Halloween night, the owner of a wagon woke up to find the farm wagon on top of the schoolhouse roof. It took real work to get that wagon apart, hoist it piece by piece, and

reassemble it up there against the stars; and much more work later, and at a price, to get it down again. To the maddened owner, it was anything but a joke.

One year, Elder Isaac McDowell sponsored a Methodist minister conference at the Methodist Church in Fairbury. The Methodist ministers of the surrounding country had met at Fairbury to transact annual church business and to be assigned to their new pulpits.

It was customary for the members of a local church to take one or more of the visiting clergy-men to their homes for the night, and so Isaac McDowell, being an Elder, invited a couple of the visitors to go home with him. They had another meeting after supper, and as the men walked back to the church after dark, the boys slipped up behind them and walloped the visitors with a piece of rubber hose.

Their victims knew enough about the town and the reputation of the McDowell boys that they made specific accusations, which the Elder denied in horror. For proof, they all rushed back to the house where they found the McDowell boys, even at that early hour, sound "asleep" in bed.

The McDowell boys performed most of their antics in the 1870s and 1880s. In those days, there were very few productive activities to occupy young people in their spare time. There were no radios, televisions, computers, or cell phones. The McDowell boys likely entertained Fairbury residents with their mischievous adventures.

One year, the three McDowell brothers did not like the circus performance they saw. They tied some of the tent ropes onto the caboose of the TP&W freight train, and when the train left, it took the circus tent with it.

The McDowell boys were infamous for pelting newly arriving TP&W train passengers with pies when the train entered the Fairbury station.

CHAPTER 71

The Colorful History of the TP&W

The colorful history of the TP&W Railroad includes one of the worst wrecks in American history, the only railroad whose President was assassinated, the longest railroad strike in history, and one of the worst railroad explosions in America.

Initially, this railroad was chartered in 1849 and named the Peoria and Oquawka Railroad. The goal was to provide a rail connection between the Illinois River in Peoria and the Mississippi River. After this goal was accomplished, the railroad laid tracks from Peoria east to the Indiana border. Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the railroad came through Livingston County.

After several name changes, in 1864, the railroad was renamed to the TP&W (Toledo, Peoria, and Warsaw). This railroad never actually ran to Toledo. Sixteen years later, in 1880, the name was changed to the Toledo, Peoria, and Western Railroad.

In the 1880s, the railroads got the idea to offer excursion trips to scenic locations like Niagara Falls. In 1887, one of these TP&W Niagara Falls excursion trains derailed in Chatsworth. The Great Chatsworth train wreck still ranks as the 7th worst wreck in American history in terms of fatalities.

During World War I, virtually all major U.S. railroads, including the TP&W, were placed under federal control by the United States Railroad Administration (USRA) starting in late 1917 and early 1918 to improve wartime efficiency. This system-wide control included smaller regional lines like the TP&W, which were operated as part of the national network until they were returned to private ownership in 1920 under the Transportation Act of 1920.

In the mid-1920s, railroads started to lose money. Passengers began using automobiles for travel, and newly paved state highways allowed trucks to haul freight that had previously been hauled by railroads. In 1926, the TP&W was purchased for $1.3 million by George P. McNear Jr., who was

a former New York Central (NYC) executive and investor. The purchase price of $1.3M in 1926 is equivalent to $23,510,316 in today's dollars.

McNear took many actions, including selling a terminal, raising capital by issuing bonds, discontinuing passenger and mail operations, and marketing the TP&W to avoid the busy Chicago and St. Louis hubs. Passenger service in Fairbury was discontinued in 1933, and the depot was torn down shortly after. The bricks from the depot were used to build the Apostolic Church at the northeast corner of South 8th Street and East Elm Street.

Because of McNear's astute management, the TP&W was one of the few railroads to be profitable during the Great Depression in the 1930s. Despite his successful efforts to reorganize the TP&W, McNear became unpopular with labor unions. He enforced his own personalized labor rules and methods, to which all thirteen of the TP&W-tied unions disagreed, and they initiated multiple unsuccessful labor strikes to restore the railway's previous conventional rules.

On December 28, 1941, another TP&W strike was initiated after the TP&W announced a new wage scale and another new set of rules. The strike was quickly ended on March 21, 1942, when U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the federal government to take control of the TP&W to have the railway aid the ongoing World War II effort. John W. Barriger III was appointed their federal manager. This change in control marked the second time in history that the Federal Government had taken over the TP&W.

In 1945, after World War II ended, control of the TP&W was returned to George McNear, but the thirteen unions immediately reinitiated the strike, thereby shutting down the railway. The strike lasted for nineteen months, and it involved multiple shootings; on two separate occasions, some gunshots were fired into an automobile with non-union employees and into a locomotive cab; on February 6, 1946, some armed guards hired by the TP&W shot five strikers (two killed; three wounded) at Gridley, Illinois.

In December 1946, federal judge J. Leroy Adair ordered the TP&W to resume operations and issued an injunction to prevent interference by strikers.

On the night of March 10, 1947, George McNear was shot and killed by an assassin with a shotgun while walking back to his home from a Bradley Braves basketball game during a power outage. McNear's murder case remains unsolved, but it was believed to be connected to the lengthy strike.

Following McNear's death, the TP&W fell under the control of McNear estate trustees, and Frisco Railway executive J. Russell Coulter became the TP&W's newest President. In May 1947, Coulter restored most of the older labor rules, and the strike quickly ended. This labor stoppage was one of the longest strikes in American railroad history.

The labor strike disputes resulted in 50% of TP&W's traffic being lost, and they led some traffic employees and executives to leave the company. By the early 1950s, however, the railway regained its lost traffic and profitability under Coulter's leadership.

Catastrophe struck the TP&W on June 21, 1970, in Crescent City, Illinois. This tragedy was the derailment of a Toledo, Peoria & Western (TP&W) freight train that led to multiple propane tank cars exploding and burning for more than two days. Those explosions destroyed or damaged a large part of Crescent City's downtown area and injured more than 60 people, but remarkably, there were no fatalities. The incident became a landmark case in hazardous materials firefighting and railroad safety because of the dramatic boiling liquid expanding vapor (BLEVE) explosions of the propane tanks.

After the 1970 Crescent City explosion, the TP&W continued to experience changes in ownership. The last significant change was in 2012, when Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W) acquired RailAmerica, gaining ownership of the TP&W, and began repainting all of its locomotives in G&W's orange-and-black paint scheme.

In 2018, Fairbury volunteers painted the TP&W shed just south of the Post Office white with green trim. New TP&W signs were printed and installed using the older TP&W logo.

Green Frog Productions is a company that makes historical DVDs of many different American railroads. Their DVD about the history of the DVD can be purchased at https://tinyurl.com/d2chvh4d. This DVD features an image of the first steam locomotive purchased by the TP&W. It was used to create the colorful steam locomotive shown on the historical mural in Veterans' Memorial Park.

Over the 168 years that Fairbury and the TP&W have existed, many Fairbury residents worked for the TP&W Railroad, and many retired after long careers. In many ways, the history of the TP&W and Fairbury is very closely intertwined.

In 2018, volunteers from the Fairbury Improvement Group repainted the TP&W operations building just south of the Post Office. New signs including the use of the older TP&W logo replaced the worn out existing signage.

CHAPTER 72

Fairbury Railroad Depots

Fairbury was founded in 1857, when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid new tracks from Peoria to Indiana. Unfortunately, we do not have any historical records for the period between 1857 and the early 1880s. The first Sanborn Insurance map of Fairbury was not made until 1885, and we only have Blade newspaper archives back to about 1882.

One of the Livingston County history books recounts that John Marsh built a hotel and depot on the west side of Fairbury. This hotel and depot cost $17,000 in 1866, which would be equivalent to $370,400 in today's dollars. Unfortunately, this hotel and depot burned down a few years after it was built.

In 1872, the Chicago & Paducah Railroad laid its tracks from Streator down to Strawn. Just a few years after this second railroad in Fairbury was built, the tracks going south from Fairbury to Strawn were removed. The railroad's name was later changed to the Wabash Railroad.

Alma Lewis James (1899-1979) was a Fairbury historian. She published the first edition of her Stuffed Clubs & Antimacassars book in 1967. Alma recounted that by 1875, Fairbury had 12 passenger trains and numerous freight trains each day. In the days of the Paducah Railroad, when Fairbury had three railroad stations, each railroad used the ground floor of a hotel for waiting and baggage rooms. One of them, the Fairbury House, in East Fairbury, had a long wooden platform from its door to the edge of the track. It was built completely across Paducah Avenue and necessitated a detour for anyone going down the street. Still, it was an excellent convenience for the trainmen who lived at the hotel. The girls used to sit on the edges of the platform, waving at the engineers as the trains went by.

Alma recounted that in 1883, the Chicago & Paducah was renamed the Wabash Railroad. To the east of Fairbury, the Paducah tracks crossed Indian Creek on a bridge supported on piles, and a small roundhouse was nearby. When the line was sold, the tracks into Strawn were rerouted to Forrest. The crews of men worked for $1.25 a day and used local teams of

oxen to do the grading. They also tore down the small roundhouse, and thereafter all trains used the big one in Forrest.

The Sanborn Insurance Company made maps of many small towns, including Fairbury. This first map of Fairbury was created in 1885. This map notes that there were Depot Grounds south of what is now Veterans Memorial Park. No buildings are shown on this site. By 1885, Paducah Avenue had been renamed Walnut Street.

Sometime around 1890, after the Chicago & Paducah had been sold, the railroad officials and the citizens got together to build a wood-frame, central depot. It had separate waiting rooms for the men, where they might smoke, and one for the ladies, where they could not, but men were allowed to sit in there if they accompanied a lady.

This new depot also had a long wooden platform lit by oil lamps. They exploded sometimes, scattering flaming oil, and it took quick work to keep the place from burning down. The station platform was a favorite loafing place of the men and some of the town toughs. Feminine passengers were often severely shocked by the loud talk and profanity. If the girls were pretty, they were apt to have the added annoyance of receiving "mash" notes from small boys.

The last passenger trains each day in Fairbury arrived at 9 PM. Baldy Eckhart, the owner of the Railroad Restaurant, kept a couch under his counter where his night man might rest until his services were needed. The restaurant also made pies.

There was one major problem with the new wood-frame depot in Fairbury: the privies behind the depot. The Local Record newspaper was quite frank about it: "The first perfume that greets the nostrils of the weary traveler as he slips off the train at Fairbury, is not a very delightful one. It suggests the thought that about two barrels of lime, used with proper discretion in the vicinity of where the fumes originate, would, in a great measure, lessen the chances of death by Asiatic Cholera, of some of Fairbury's citizens."
In 1902, Von Tobel sold his unsightly lumberyard, which sat on what is now Veterans Memorial Park. Volunteers filled in this sunken area using dirt brought in by the railroad. The GAR (Grand Army of the Republic) donated the two Civil War cannons that still sit in this park today.

Around 1905, a beautiful new brick depot was built to replace the old wood-frame building. It was "considered one of the finest for a town of its size in the entire state."

The new depot was a respectable place, for the police watched it closely. Loafers were discouraged, drunks were jailed, small boys were in school, and so the depot became a social center. Well before train time, the travelers, suitcases in hand, gathered to purchase their tickets at three cents a mile and take seats in the waiting room, anxious to see who else was going away.

There were always the traveling salesmen, the Fairbury Hotel porter who met the trains with his cart to get the baggage, and, on other mornings, the passengers were usually shoppers and businessmen, generally bound for Peoria.

In the evening, all along the line, the larger social functions were timed to match the train schedule, and a good part of the passengers' fun was the train trip to get there. The reporters from the newspapers were busy inside the depot and on the platform, checking on the comings and goings. There was no chance that a trip, for private business or pleasure, could go unnoticed or unannounced to the town. Their questions could be annoyingly personal, but any objections to answering them all made a reporter even more insistent.
When the time for the train drew near, the mail bags arrived on the post office cart. The baggage truck was pulled to the edge of the platform.

In 1908, postcards with a photo of the new brick Fairbury depot started to be sold. Several of these old postcards still exist today.

Although the people of Fairbury did not realize it at the time, 1908 marked the beginning of the dramatic decline in rail travel. Henry Ford introduced his low-cost Model T, which sparked a dramatic shift toward people driving their own automobiles instead of taking the train.

The 1911 Sanborn map shows the brick depot and a freight depot just south of the passenger depot.

By the late 1920s, passenger traffic had reduced dramatically. The TP&W stopped passenger service to Fairbury around 1933. The brick depot was torn down, and the bricks were used to build the Apostolic Church at the northeast corner of South Eighth and East Elm Streets in Fairbury.

For over seven decades, railroad depots in Fairbury played a crucial role in the transportation system. These depots were also a social gathering spot.

Fairbury's new brick depot circa 1914. This depot was built around 1905 and was of brick construction.

CHAPTER 73

Rare John Virgin Family Items Returned to Fairbury

John Virgin (1838-1900) was one of Fairbury's most prominent citizens. He was a Civil War veteran and married Serepta Jane "Jennie" McDowell, who was a member of the well-known pioneer McDowell family. John imported French Percheron horses and sold them to local farmers. He was active in the Fairbury Fair and the Illinois State Fair, and the Governor appointed him to organize the agricultural exhibit at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, also known as the Chicago World's Fair.

Around 1910, John Virgin's widow, Serepta Virgin, took a box of family keepsakes with her when she moved to California with her daughter. This box traveled to six states over the next 115 years and was returned to the Fairbury Echoes Museum by Betsy Howell in 2025. Analysis of this box revealed a treasure trove of rare historical documents.

During the Civil War, soldiers often carried a very small Bible with them. John Virgin carried one of these small Bibles with him during the War. In his 1860 Bible, he wrote on the front page, "1864 – Carried by John Virgin thru the War of 61: The Rebellion. "On the back page, he wrote, "If any man should find this book, please send it to her, Y. P. Virgin, Pontiac, Livingston County, Illinois. The property of John Virgin, a volunteer in the service of the United States at Fairbury, IL. August 20, 1861."

Soldiers often wrote a note like this in their Bibles so that in the event the Bible was lost or they were killed, the Bible could be returned to the soldier's relatives. The mysterious thing about John's notation was that there was no Y. P. Virgin in his family tree. His mother was Lucinda Virgin.

In 1861, right before John Virgin entered the Union Army, he bought a beautiful photo album for his girlfriend. Inside the front cover, he wrote, "From John Virgin to Jennie McDowell, 1861." Jennie began filling the photo album immediately, and she first put in Civil War-era photographs of John Virgin and herself. She also included old tintype photos of her

male relatives dressed in their Civil War uniforms. Jennie continued to fill this photo album with about 50 photographs taken between 1861 and 1900.

Also in the photo album is a beautiful photo of the John Virgin family with three of his four daughters. There are also photos of the two daughters who died at ages 15 and 27.

Many soldiers also often carried a small photograph of their wife or girlfriend. John Virgin carried a small picture of his girlfriend, "Jennie" McDowell, which was taken at DeLong's Gallery on Locust Street in Fairbury, Illinois.

John Virgin apparently accidentally lost the photo of his girlfriend on the battlefield. At a later date, another soldier found this photograph and, years later, returned it to John Virgin in Fairbury. This soldier likely traced the owner back to Fairbury because the picture was taken at DeLong's Gallery in Fairbury. This soldier wrote a small note identifying his unit and the date he found the lost photograph on the battlefield.
Two rare documents from John Virgin's Civil War service were preserved in this box. The first document is from 1863, when John Virgin was promoted to the position of Orderly Sergeant. In that era, the Orderly Sergeant was the senior non-commissioned officer responsible for the company's administrative duties—keeping roll books, recording daily orders, reporting the company's status, overseeing discipline, preparing reports, and relaying officers' orders to enlisted men.

The second document was John Virgin's 1864 discharge paper from the Union Army, following his three-year enlistment. John Virgin returned to Fairbury after the War, and he married Jennie McDowell in 1865. John was 26, and Jennie was 22 when they got married. They had four girls, whom they named Georgia Annie Virgin, Minnie Alice Virgin, Alta Zeo Virgin, and Daisy Dean Virgin. Georgia Virgin died in 1881 at the age of 15, and Alta Zeo Virgin died in 1897 at the age of 27.

From the end of the Civil War until the 1880s, John Virgin imported Percheron horses from France and sold them to Fairbury area farmers. He built his “Horse Palace” to house the horses. It was located across the alley to the north of where the Walton building is today. He often entered some of his Percheron horses in the State Fairs at Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska.

His entries usually won first prize at these state fairs. John Virgin created a business card with an artist's illustration of one of his prize-winning Percheron horse teams. Using modern software, this old black-and-white business card yielded a gorgeous colorized photo of his winning Percheron horse team.

John Virgin was a member of the Illinois State Board of Agriculture. Members of this board and their wives were granted annual free passes to ride the TP&W passenger trains. Some of these yearly passes for John and his wife for 1891 and 1892 were included in the box of family treasures.

Because of his prominence in Illinois agricultural affairs, the Governor of Illinois appointed John Virgin of Fairbury to create the Agricultural Exhibit at the 1893 Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair). Because of his role in this event, he was issued a free pass to enter the fair every day. His free pass is included in the box of family treasures.

An 1897 document was included in the box. It is the membership certificate for John Virgin as a member of the GAR. The GAR was a social club created initially for surviving members of the Civil War. It was the forerunner of the American Legion group that exists today. He was a founding member of the Fairbury GAR group.

Unfortunately, Alta Zeo Virgin, the 27-year-old daughter of John Virgin, died unexpectedly of tuberculosis of the bowels. This disease was a fatal infection of the intestinal tract caused by TB, which produced long-term gastrointestinal symptoms and ultimately led to death due to complications like obstruction, hemorrhage, or widespread infection. In that era, invitations were sent to people to attend a funeral. One of these invitations for the funeral of Alta Zeo Virgin was included in the box of family treasures.

John Virgin was a member and officer in the National French Horse Association because of his business of importing Percheron horses. Among the effects in the box of family treasures is his invitation to attend the 1900 meeting of this association in Chicago. John Virgin attended this meeting and became ill just as the membership was about to vote on whether to re-elect him as Vice-President of this association. John Virgin was taken backstage while the voting continued. Unfortunately, he died

backstage while the membership voted for him to continue to serve as Vice-President. John Virgin was 62 when he died in November 1900 in Chicago.

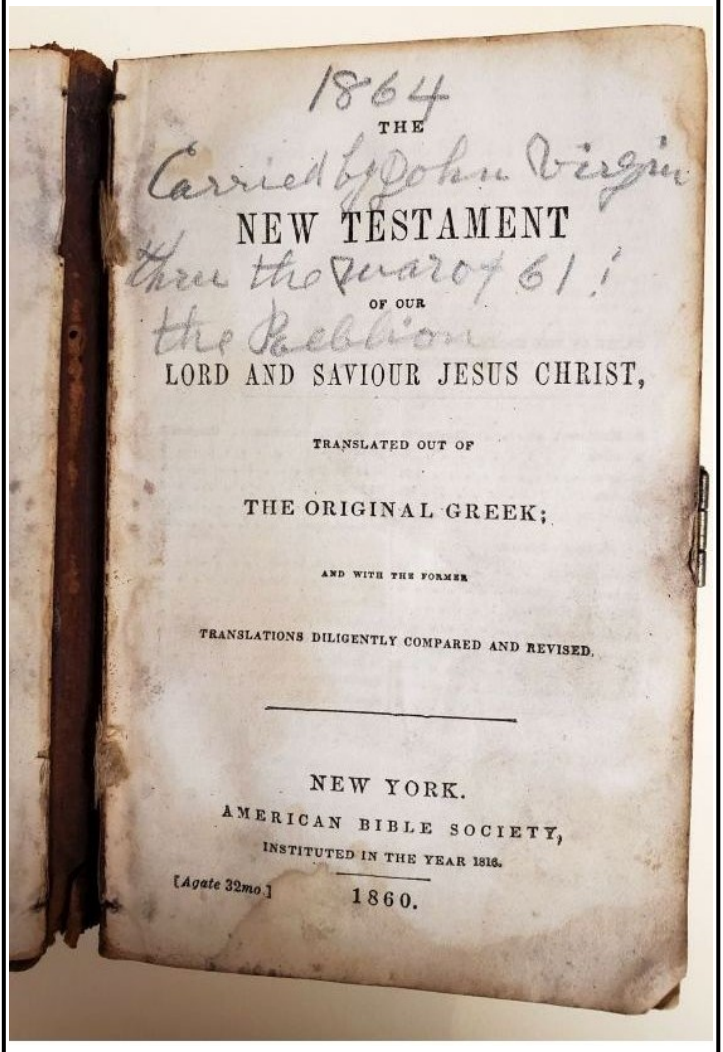
Congress eventually passed a law awarding pensions to widows of men who served in the Civil War. Among the effects in the box of family treasures is the pension certificate awarded to Jennie Virgin in 1908.

Jennie Virgin moved to California with one of her daughters after John Virgin's death. She died in 1935 at the age of 93. An obituary for her was published in a California newspaper.

One Fairbury mystery is how the name Fairbury was chosen in 1857, when the village was founded. Alma Lewis James was a Fairbury historian who published her history book titled Stuffed Clubs and Antimaccassars in 1967. In her book, Alma stated that she was unable to determine why the name of Fairbury was chosen.

In the California obit for Jennie McDowell, it was reported, "Her family were pioneers in Fairbury, and it was by their suggestion that the town derived its name." Jennie was a member of the McDowell family, one of the pioneer settlers who arrived in the Fairbury area. Someone in the McDowell family likely suggested the name of Fairbury for the new village.

Many thanks go to Betsy Howell for saving this precious box of John Virgin family artifacts and shipping it from Washington state to the Fairbury Echoes Museum. All of the rare documents found in the box have been scanned and saved as digital files on Archive.org so descendants or researchers can easily find them in the future. These documents are a valuable part of Fairbury's history.


1864
THE
Carried by John Virgin
NEW TESTAMENT
thru the war of 61:
OF OUR
the Rebellion
LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST,
TRANSLATED OUT OF
THE ORIGINAL GREEK;
AND WITH THE FORMER
TRANSLATIONS DILIGENTLY COMPARED AND REVISED.
NEW YORK.
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY,
INSTITUTED IN THE YEAR 1816.
[Agate 32mo.]
1860.

The small 1860 Bible that John Virgin carried with him during the Civil War. On the front page, he wrote, "Carried by John Virgin thru the War of 61: the Rebellion."

CHAPTER 74

Formation of the Fairbury Fair

The first Fairbury Fair was held in 1876, so the year 2026 marks the 150th Anniversary of the Fairbury Fair. This article is the first in a series examining the history of the long-running Fairbury Fair.

Fairbury was founded in 1857 when the Peoria & Oquawka Railroad laid its tracks from Peoria to Indiana. In the 1860 U.S. Census, Fairbury only had a population of 269. Over the next two decades, Fairbury experienced rapid population growth, rising from 1,493 in 1870 to 2,140 in 1880.

As Fairbury entered the 1870s, agriculture was the primary industry in this area. Farmers needed horses to farm, so several firms were established to sell them to farmers. John Virgin (1838-1900) set up a firm that imported Percheron draft horses from France and sold them to Fairbury-area farmers. John Virgin also designed and built his unique "Horse Palace" just north of where the Walton Center is today.

The first fairs in Livingston County began about 1850 and were held on the courthouse square. The primary force in organizing these early fairs was Mr. Samuel Ladd. But only a few articles were exhibited, and at the close of the day's entertainment, a hat was passed to raise money to defray expenses. These primitive fairs generally went by the name of "rope fairs" because a rope was stretched around the articles being exhibited.

A permanent organization was created in early 1856. A Constitution was developed and approved for the Livingston County Agricultural Society. The first Livingston County Fair was held in the Fall of 1856, in the courthouse square in Pontiac. No admission fee was charged, and a minimal list of premiums was offered.

In 1865, the Livingston County Agricultural Society purchased the old fairgrounds, south of the Vermilion River in Pontiac, which they furnished with buildings, stalls, and a sound half-mile track, and which were occupied until 1878.

In 1872, the Illinois Legislature passed a law changing the State Agricultural Society to the State Agricultural Board, and gave it certain privileges. The same act provided that any County Agricultural Society forming an organization in compliance with this law would be entitled to $100 each season a fair was held.

To comply with the new State law, the Livingston County Agricultural Society changed its name to the Livingston County Agricultural Board.

There were likely two drivers behind Fairbury starting the Fairbury Fair in 1876. The first driver was the 1872 Illinois State Law, which promoted the formation of fairs and offered to contribute $100 to any fair that held one each season. This state funding would be equivalent to $2,664 in today's dollars.

John Virgin was the second primary driver in establishing the Fairbury Fair. He was nationally known for his Percheron breeding business. John Virgin could promote his horse business by making entries in the Fairbury Fair and other Fairs in the Midwest.

1876 was a terrible year for Livingston County farmers due to excessive rainfall and flooding. The Livingston County Agricultural Board recounted that "owing to the unfortunate condition of the county from the long continual rains, and consequent failure of crops, there was no fair held by this Society in 1876."

The men organizing the Fairbury Fair decided to go ahead and hold the first Fairbury Fair in 1876, even though the Pontiac folks canceled their fair.

Unfortunately, we have no copies of the Fairbury Blade available before 1882. The Illinois Department of Agriculture published annual reports that included information about fairs. The 1878 book, which reported on the 1877 Fair, covers the second year of the Fairbury Fair.

This book reported that the Fairbury Union Agricultural Board had an organizational founding date of March 25, 1876, and a date of incorporation of April 4, 1876. John Virgin was President, John G. Steers

was Vice-President, Ed Annable was Secretary, and C. C. Bartlett was the Treasurer.

About 200 members or shareholders each contributed $25 for the one share of stock they were issued. This financing structure raised $5,000 and would be equivalent to $150,000 in today's dollars. This book reports that the 2nd annual Fairbury Fair was held on September 11, 12, 13, and 14.

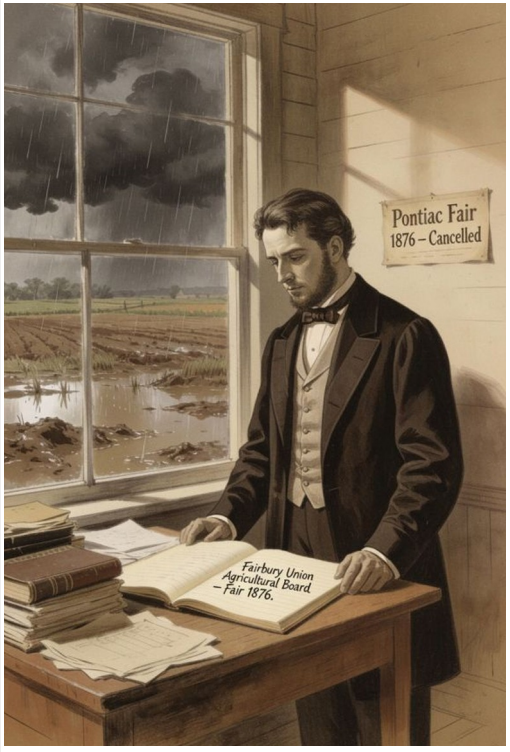
The Fairbury Fair had 13 different departments. The most popular department in terms of entries was the Horses Department with 334 entries. The second-most popular was the Horticulture and Floriculture Department, with 291 entries. The third most popular was the Farm Products department, which had 284 entries.

In total, the Fairbury Fair had 1,748 total entries and paid total premiums of $2,134. These total premiums would be equivalent to $64,000 in today's dollars.

Ed Annable, Secretary, noted in the annual report to the State of Illinois, "We have made considerable improvements on our grounds this year, having set out quite a number of trees, built a number of new stalls and pens and numerous improvement which make a fair ground attractive, which we expect to continue improving from year to year, as occasion may require.

Mr. Annable closed out his annual report saying, "The Success of the past two years has given the Fairbury Fair a splendid reputation and placed it among the established fairs of the State, thereby giving it a start that I can see nothing to hinder making the third annual fair more successful than either of the two past."

In retrospect, it took great courage to launch the first Fairbury Fair amid a year of terrible weather for agriculture. The Livingston County Fair, which had been going on for 20 years, decided to cancel its 1876 Fair. John Virgin was a leading businessman and later became involved with the Fairbury Fair, the Illinois State Fair, and the 1893 Columbian Exposition (Chicago World's Fair). He was a visionary and a leader, and likely one of the main reasons the Fairbury Fair launched in 1876.



John Virgin decided to go ahead with the 1st Fairbury Fair in 1876 even though Pontiac had canceled their fair due to a terrible wet year for farming.

Recommended Reading

Stuffed Clubs and Antimacassars by Alma Lewis James.

Other Fairbury History Books by Dale C. Maley……

The McDowell Family of Fairbury, Illinois

Fairbury, Illinois in the Civil War

Fairbury, Illinois, in the World Wars

Coal Mining in Fairbury, Illinois

Fairbury, Illinois Book Authors

Fairbury, Illinois in 1888

Fairbury, Illinois, from Prehistoric to Modern Times

Fairbury, Illinois and the 1893 Columbian Exposition

William T. Stackpole of Fairbury, Illinois

William T. Stackpole's 1849 Journey from Illinois to the California Gold Fields

Author Spotlight

Dale C. Maley

Dale C. Maley is President of the Livingston County Historical Society and the Fairbury Echoes Museum. Dale is an expert on Fairbury, Illinois, history and has written over 370 newspaper articles and more than 25 books about Fairbury history. Both Dale and his wife are 5th generation citizens of Fairbury.

Also by Dale C. Maley

Fairbury and Livingston County History Books

- Coal Mining in Fairbury, Illinois
- Fairbury, Illinois and the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition
- Fairbury History Stories Volume 1
- Fairbury, Illinois from Prehistoric to Modern Times

- Fairbury, Illinois in 1888
- Fairbury, Illinois in the Civil War
- Fairbury, Illinois in the World Wars
- Franklin Oliver: Pioneer Settler of Livingston County, Illinois
- History of Murders Committed in Fairbury, Illinois

- Honegger's & Co. of Fairbury, Illinois
- Livingston County Historical Society: It's Beginning and Some Later Years with Updates
- The Great Chatsworth Train Wreck of 1887
- The Founding of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Goudy Bros. of Fairbury, Illinois
- The Kring Family of Fairbury, Illinois
- The McDowell Family of Fairbury, Illinois

- Walton Bros. of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole of Fairbury, Illinois
- William T. Stackpole's 1849 Journey from Illinois to the California Gold Fields